This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

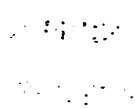
THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

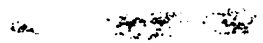
G868.8209
B478t

2 G868.8209 B478T LAC
2

LIBRARY
USE ONLY

Digitized by Google





Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CALL NO.
868.8208
B478t

SEP 5 1952

TO REPAIR SERVICE
8-21-52
DATE 8-19-52
REGULAR [X]
RUSH [ ]
ACCESSION NO.
159521

AUTHOR AND TITLE
Fassett, Jacob S.Jr.--translator
Bierstadt, Edward H.--editor

Three Plays of the Argentine

SIGNED
BRANCH L.A.
SPECIAL BOOK PLATE [ ]
PHOTOSTAT MISSING PAGES
ANOTHER COPY IN TxU
ANOTHER EDITION IN TxU
MINOR REPAIRS
SUPERIFICIAL MENDING
SENT TO BIND PREP. DATE
AUG 20 1952
REBINDING INSTRUCTIONS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THREE PLAYS OF THE ARGENTINE

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THREE PLAYS OF THE ARGENTINE

JUAN MOREIRA
SANTOS VEGA
THE WITCHES' MOUNTAIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY
JACOB S. FASSETT, JR.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT

NEW YORK
DUFFIELD AND COMPANY
1920

159521 BOUND OCT 1952
Digitized by Google

Copyright, 1920, by
DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

[The plays in this volume are fully protected, and all rights in their production, either for the stage or for moving pictures are held by Edward Hale Bierstadt. Application must be made to Mr. Bierstadt through the publishers by those desiring to use the plays.]

Printed in the U. S. A.

Digitized by Google

TO MY MOTHER

IN LOVE AND GRATITUDE

E. H. B.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	xi
JUAN MOREIRA	1
SANTOS VEGA	21
THE WITCHES' MOUNTAIN	77
APPENDIX A	131
APPENDIX B	138
APPENDIX C	142
APPENDIX D	148

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE

It is my desire in this volume to give an outline, somewhat rough it may be, of the course the drama has taken in that great country of the pampas to which our sympathies have so often inclined only to be frustrated by our ignorance. No possible pretense is made that this is a complete and detailed history of the dramatic literature of the Argentine. For the present, however, it will serve.

My greatest emphasis I have placed upon the *dramas criollos*, not because they represent the climax of the dramatic art in the Argentine, but because they are possessed of certain distinct characteristics which render them peculiar in the study of the drama in general. They are a folk drama in the most perfect sense, and as such the consideration of their inception and their further career is not without importance. They are interesting not only in themselves, but even more so in the deductions which they suggest. The Argentine has developed beyond them; they are no longer popular, and the least sign of their revival is greeted with lamentations, for the silk-hatted gentleman of the Avenue is not always proud of the fact that his youth was bare-headed. Moreover, there is a natural tendency on the part of all individuals and of all nations to develop toward a more sophisticated form of expression. It is a matter of pride, of self-respect, of one's relationship with other individuals and other nations. There is certainly nothing criminal in short trousers, but the boy who is kept in them overlong suffers from a natural embarrassment. Hence this book is merely a "trail-breaker" in what has been, to most of us, an

Digitized by Google

almost unknown forest. If it stimulates another, either through the interest it arouses in him, or the irritation it causes him, to turn the trail into a highway, it will have served its purpose.

I wish here to acknowledge my indebtedness to a number of friends who have been most kind in aiding me in this work, the genesis of which was in the many interesting talks I had with Spring Byington Chandler, and her husband, Roy Chandler, whose theatrical experience in the Argentine was of the utmost service to me. It was through Mr. and Mrs. Chandler that I first came in touch with Dr. David Peña, whose courtesy and patience have been inexhaustible, and who has supplied me with much data. Mr. John Garrett Underhill has helped me, not only with material, but with advice, and most of all in directing me to my translator, Jacob S. Fassett, Jr., whose work will speak for itself in these pages. Mr. Archer Huntington, good genius of the Hispanic Society of America, has been generous in aiding me, as has my friend Barrett H. Clark. For the rest, if I do not mention them each specifically, it is not because I have forgotten or because I do not appreciate fully their contributions, but only because the list would be too long for so short a book to carry gracefully.

I cannot hope that all my friends in the Argentine or in the United States will agree with me in the opinions I have stated, the deductions I have made, or in the material I have selected. To the first I can only say that if I have erred it has certainly been through no desire to belittle the real achievements of the great republic of the south, and the latter I can only remind that all criticism and all selection are a matter of personal opinion. I have felt that in a day and age when so much that was false, superficial, and tawdry held the stage it would be not only instructive and interesting, but a real inspiration as well, to blow the haze

Digitized by Google

of time from before a drama as refreshing and as naïve as the proverbial barefoot boy. There is no question in my mind but that *Penrod* would like these plays, and that they would create a real illusion for him. And in our attitude toward any art the more nearly we can come to *Penrod's* point of view the better.

E. H. B.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION

The Drama of the Argentine

It is only within the last few years that we have come to realize how appalling and how sweeping our ignorance of artistic, social, and commercial conditions in South America is. Properly to understand and to appreciate any one of these phases it is highly desirable that we have some knowledge of the other two. If one is entering upon a relationship of any type with a man of a strange country, it is obviously useful to know something of the manner in which he conducts himself in the life about him; and surely there is no better exponent of the social structure of a people than is evidenced by their art. Our interest in these questions, in this particular instance, need not be that which is prompted either by mere curiosity or the desire for commercial benefit. It is not the necessity of the scholar to know for the sake of knowing, but, strange as it may appear to many of us, we shall not be wrong in basing our interest upon an appreciative utilitarianism, a desire to know and to respect a thing or a people who may be able to tell us something worth knowing, who may have developed some phase of life to a higher point than we ourselves. Hence it is my desire here to lift the veil a little and to show something of the culture of the southern continent by outlining, rather briefly and roughly, the development of the drama in the Argentine Republic, for, so far as I know, nowhere else in South America has this art progressed in so interesting and important a manner.

Digitized by Google

The Argentine Republic has been in existence only a very little more than one hundred years, and at least forty of these have been passed in a most inorganic state. The progress made in the other sixty has been no less than astounding. It was in 1816 that the great revolution took place under the leadership of the famous San Martín, which freed the Argentine forever from the Spanish rule, but it was nearly 1880 before the country began to show unmistakable evidence of having a drama of its own. There had been drama before this, it is true, but it had been either that left by the Spaniard or a native product of small interest. It is said, however, that there was Argentine drama as far back as 1747, during the governorship of Juan Andonaegui, to celebrate the elevation to the throne of Spain of Fernando VI. Records, moreover, show that the first theater was established in Buenos Aires by the Viceroy, Vértiz. It was called La Ranchería, and in 1817 there was formed in the same city the Sociedad del Buen Gusto, the Society of Good Taste. This was intended to foster Argentine drama, and the first play produced under its auspices was *Cornelia Berorquia*, which was advertised as "a masterpiece by one of our compatriots." Alfred Coester in his book entitled *The Literary History of Spanish America* remarks as follows: "The same hyperbolical and declamatory rhetoric made popular two dramas by Varela, *Dido* and *Argia*, written for production before the Sociedad del Buen Gusto in Buenos Aires. These were in some respects the most original dramas produced under the influence of that society for the promotion of the drama. In 1823 the tirades in *Dido* created enthusiasm for their apt references to the political situation. The same was true of *Argia* a year later. This play was based on Alfieri's *Antigone*, while *Dido* sometimes followed Virgil word for word."

About this time, however, certain dramatic works came into

Digitized by Google

being which were distinctly national in character, though still retaining in some degree the influence of their Spanish forebears. This was the first real flash of light, and it must be confessed that the plays of this period which are remembered attained success more on account of the names of the authors than because of any merit of their own. Such were the first works of Don Martín Coronado:[1] *Rosa Blanca—Luz de Luna y Luz de Incendio*. One might mention also *Los Carpani* by Doña Eduarda Mansilla de García, various works by Don Emilio Onrubia, and *Qué dirá la Sociedad* by Dr. David Peña, who, at the time of writing it, was not more than seventeen or eighteen years old. It may be said here that few people have exercised a more potent and beneficent influence upon the later drama of the Argentine than has Dr. Peña during his long years of service.

For several years after this short epoch the drama decayed gradually until it finally took a most singular and novel form. There came into being the *dramas criollos*, the creole or native drama, and this development was of so unique a nature that it demands a more detailed consideration.

The dramas which preceded the *dramas criollos* were, or purported to be, of a distinctly literary character, and therein lay their weakness; they were more literary than dramatic, and more foreign than colloquial in interest. Now came a time when the drama was to spring from the soil, indigenous in expression, content, and in form. The earlier drama has exerted little or no influence upon the people as a whole; it was more or less a class product, but now was to come a drama "of the people" in the strictest sense, one possessing little literary value, but one which was rich in color, action, and in sympathetic appeal. Before taking these plays up specially it may be well to devote our attention for a moment to *indigenous* drama as such, thus making sure of our

[1] See Note A in Appendix.

Digitized by Google

"approach" before we endeavor to "hole out" on the green.

The wide and well-justified popularity of the contemporary Irish drama has reopened several questions of distinct interest, one of which bears directly on this theme. That is, what is indigenous drama and where can it be found? On the face of it this would seem simple, but it is not so in reality. That which is truly indigenous is peculiar to a country, partaking as little as possible of anything outside of that country, either directly or indirectly. Thus an indigenous drama in the absolute sense would mean a drama the content, expression, and form of which were of a certain country, and of that country alone; and, as the relationship between the drama and the theater is of so intimate a nature we might even assume a like unique quality on the part of the stage. Hence we can say at once that there does not exist in all probability an indigenous drama in the absolute sense. We may well thank Heaven for it, for such excessive peculiarity would be important merely as a curiosity, and would exercise no influence whatever on the drama as a whole: it could not, for it would bear only a relationship by courtesy to it and, considered exactly, could hardly even be called drama at all. The absolute as usual destroys itself in its disregard of the relative.

The Irish drama is distinct in content and in expression, but in form it is entirely conventional. This is, of course, not said in criticism, but merely to point a fact. I have taken the Irish as my example simply because I know of no more indigenous drama to be found in western civilization, with one exception. The Irish drama employs Gaelic or a dialect for its expression, and both of these are indigenous in the most strict sense. Its content is assuredly peculiar in the highest degree to the country of its origin. More than this can be said of no people—I except the Oriental races—with one exception. We may exclude the expression as

Digitized by Google

being largely a question of language. Isolated examples can easily be found in all countries which will fulfil the condition of content, but it is not with isolated examples we are dealing, but with a school or type of drama extending over a whole country for an appreciable period of time. Drama of the country, by the country, and for the country expresses it succinctly. America, England, France, Germany, and Scandinavia, none of them throw any light, except a dark one, on the problem. There is but one country which does, and that is the Argentine.

The *dramas criollos* are usually known to us of the north, when they are known at all, as *gaucho* plays. This is but natural, for at the time this drama held its sway the gaucho was the Argentine. The gaucho is not unlike our own cowboy, and yet he is much more than that—he is the pioneer and the outlaw also. After the Indian came the gaucho, and, though he occupied a very definite place in the scheme of things, he never admitted the rule of any one who was not of his own ilk. He resisted the rule of the Spaniard, but he resisted the rule of the Argentineans, of whom he was one, quite as vigorously. He fought to put Rosas into office because Rosas claimed kinship with him, but when Rosas changed the Presidential chair into the throne of a tyrant and turned against his brethren it was the gaucho who ultimately brought him to his fall. Thus the gaucho is different from any other type. He is the national hero par excellence; he is a unique and powerful symbol of the people. It may make the case more clear to say that he is a strange and fascinating mixture of Daniel Boone, the pioneer, of Buffalo Bill, the beau ideal of the cowboy, and of Robin Hood, the outlaw, and the friend of the masses against the classes. It must be remembered, too, that the Argentine is a great cattle country, that there is no other prime interest in the country which amounts to anything besides cattle.

Digitized by Google

the national wealth, the whole raison d'être of the land, is in the great herds of cattle out on the pampas, or plains. Likewise there are not the great sectional differences that confront us here, or there were not a few years ago. It is much as if our own "wild west" bordered directly on New York City. Buenos Aires is the only great city of the Argentine, and the pampas rolled up to its very gates.

The gaucho also has certain characteristics that are peculiarly his own. He must be a perfect cattleman, of course, expert with the lasso and quick with the knife and the revolver, and, more than this, he has a poetic side which must not be disregarded. He must play well upon the guitar, and he must be able to hold his own in the serenade or singing contest. There were *payadores* or wandering gaucho minstrels who rode the pampas with their guitars on their backs and their knives in their belts. Such was Santos Vega, the traditional *payador* of the Argentine. The singing contest consisted of a bout between two *payadores*, who in turn extemporized verses to the accompaniment of their guitars. Some of these verses were general in nature, bearing on the gaucho and his wrongs. They were laments in reality, and have some resemblance atmospherically to our own cowboy songs, which are lugubrious to a degree. But in the contest one gaucho would ask a series of questions in verse, to which the other had to reply aptly and wittily. If he failed an answer, or answered poorly, he lost. At the same time there was an undercurrent of personalities in the songs which were intended to sting the other singer to a hot retort. In plain American slang—they tried to get each other's goat! The one who failed to turn the edge of the blow with his retort or who lost his temper was adjudged the loser. And at the same time all the verse had to conform to certain rules and conventions which gave birth in time to what is now known as gaucho verse, a ballad form not unlike that of François

Digitized by Google

Villon. It was no mean feat and would have been utterly impossible to a people who were not perfectly accustomed to couch their ideas in verse as a matter of course, a nation at once poetical and musical.

On the whole, then, the gaucho is or was the king, benevolent or otherwise, of the country. This is naturally becoming less true every day as the conditions which gave birth to the gaucho change and depart. So it is that the gaucho plays are to be seen less and less often in the theaters. Nevertheless they are, from one standpoint at least, the most significant dramatic development the country has produced.

In the early days of the Argentine Republic and, indeed, today there were traveling circuses which went from town to town, staying in each so long as it seemed profitable to do so. These in time became an institution, and the management was handed down in the same families for generations, as were the traditions of the clowns and acrobats. Gradually there crept into the circus performance a short, informal, and sometimes impromptu play which dealt with local conditions, and so was easily appreciated by the rustic audience. These plays were for the most part frank melodramas which were all written about the national figure, the gaucho. In time the plays took form until there came to be a definite repertory, and, after a certain point, no additions were made to this, so that we have a small group of plays repeated for years all over the country, adored by the people, and, in due course, scoffed at by those wise ones whose taste had benefited by European excursions. And the plays grew in body and in interest until from being merely an act of the circus proper they divorced themselves from their progenitor entirely and demanded a place of their own. The two great theatrical managers of Buenos Aires today—they are actor-managers and producers—are the brothers Podestá, who many years ago began their career as members of a family

Digitized by Google

of acrobats in a traveling circus which included the gaucho plays. To them was first entrusted the work of producing the *dramas criollos* as such, and during the time when the native plays were running their course the Podestás were its ablest exponents. They have even produced the gaucho plays in Buenos Aires itself many times, but now, alas, they have graduated, perforce, into the later and more sophisticated forms of the drama, for the gaucho has had his day and has passed into history.

José J. Podestá, a criollo himself in the broadest sense of the term, wrote a pantomime which was played in 1884 by Podestá and his brother-in-law, Scotti, as part of the program of a circus owned and managed by the brothers Carlo. The pantomime was a great success, but its run was interrupted because the Carlos had to go to Brazil to fill a contract, and for some reason they did not take Podestá and his play with them. A little later Podestá and Scotti formed a circus company of their own with which they traveled about the province of Buenos Aires, but whether the pantomime was included I do not know.

After Podestá made his first great success with *Juan Moreira* in 1886 they moved their company from Chivilcoy to Montevideo. Following *Juan Moreira* came *Martín Fierro* (attributed severally to José Hernandez and Dr. Elias Regules) and *Juan Cuello*, by Luis Mejías, taken from a like-named novel by Eduardo Gutiérrez. Then the company moved again, this time to the Teatro Apollo in Buenos Aires. From 1889 to 1898 appeared *Julián Giménez*, by Abdón Arósteguy; *El Entenao*, by Dr. Elias Regules; *Juan Soldao*, by Orosmán Moratorio; *Cobarde*, by Victor Pérez Petit; *Santos Vega*, by Nosiglia; *Calandria*, by Martiniano Leguizamón—this, by the way, is said to be the first gaucho drama written with any pretense at literary style; and *Tranquera*, by Agustín Fontanella.

Digitized by Google

From 1898 on the type began to change. The gaucho began to disappear. The *dramas criollos* had had a hard time of it even at the start. There was a paucity of companies to present them; many companies came from abroad with preconceived plans and repertories all made up and were little disposed to bother with local attempts at playwriting. All efforts to really establish gaucho drama failed until Podestá and Scotti took over the Teatro Apollo in Buenos Aires. First they rented it for a week, then for a month, then for two months, and finally the months lengthened into eleven years. This company gave rise to others, such as Geronimo's and Pablo Podestá's, and each new company in turn had its schooling at the original Teatro Apollo.

From the time when the *dramas criollos* took their place in the sun up to the present there has been little change in their representation. The plays themselves have remained the same; there have been no additions of sufficient importance to become permanent, and the small body of historic drama has become fixed, classic. Its line, its business, and its general mode of production are almost as much a matter of convention as those of the plays of Molière at the Comédie Française. As a matter of fact it was not until recently that the plays were committed to paper at all, much less published. They were handed down by word of mouth along with the accessories of their presentation, the lines and business being so well known to the native audiences that a howl of fury would greet any deviation, however slight, from the traditional form. They have been in print less than ten years.

After their separation from the circus the *dramas criollos* were performed, for the most part, by traveling companies who carried with them a portable theater which included even an auditorium. This building was about 120 feet long and a third as wide. The top was of corrugated iron,

Digitized by Google

while the body of the structure was of wood. Within two or, at the most, three days after the company had arrived in a town the theater was ready for occupancy. It was clamped together, the joints fitting into one another so cunningly that the whole was as solid as if nails and mortar had been used in its erection. Inside the house was the stage at one end, with just enough room behind it for the necessary changes of costume; there were but few of them. In front of the stage was a ring, a relic of the old circus days, with an aisle leading from it, through the audience, to the outside, so that, when it was desirable, exits and entrances could be made in this manner. It greatly facilitated the use of horses which were so much a part and parcel of the gaucho that even on the stage his "sorrel steed" had a rôle to play in the performance. While the players in the guise of gauchos raided the peaceful hacienda on the stage, their peons held their horses in the ring below. Then when the dreadful work was done, with yells and shouts the villains would leap the footlights, swing themselves on their plunging mounts, and dash out through the excited audience to safety. Some such use of the horses will be found in two of the plays included in this volume.

The scenery used, when there was any at all, was of the most primitive description, consisting for the most part of very crude back cloths and such properties as were absolutely essential. The lighting was on the same scale—oil lamps, lanterns, and, even in some instances, candles and torches were utilized. The stage took most of its lighting from whatever footlights could be provided.

Those of the audience who composed family parties, and there were many such, were seated in small compartments or boxes which were placed in a long tier around the sides of the house, but not at the back, for here the seats, or rather benches, rose steeply until they thrust that unfortunate

Digitized by Google

who was in the topmost row in close juxtaposition to the iron roof which was either freezing cold or burning hot, depending upon the season. The matinée is very rare in South America, for it infringes too heavily on that most necessary adjunct, the siesta, and the early afternoon is often too warm to permit the enjoyment of even the most entrancing play. These theaters were like ice-houses in winter, for there was no method of heating them adequately, and the Argentine winter in the uplands is not to be sneezed at, though it is not seldom to be sneezed with! Decoration was almost totally absent, and so likewise was ventilation, but who is he who will pause to take thought for creature comfort within the worshiping-place of art? At any rate I am convinced that there are some of our own managers who proceed on that principle.

The plays themselves were usually not long, but consisted of many scenes, some of which only lasted long enough to convey a fleeting impression; connecting scenes between the acts they were in reality. This resulted in making the plays episodic in the extreme; perhaps the closest likeness to their form being that of the moving picture. *Juan Moreira* is a good example of this tendency. Certain "wild west" elements were usually retained in some degree, but these, after all, were an essential part of the gaucho character.

The cost of admission to the play was usually from twenty to seventy cents. The boxes were primarily for family use, but when one bought a box one had to pay an entrada or entrance fee as well. This custom of a double price is common all through Latin America from Mexico to the Straits. The entrada permits one to enter the theater and to stand, but if one desires to sit down, the seat itself is extra.

In the true *dramas criollos* the gaucho is always the protagonist. He is usually shown pitted against the soldiers from the capital or against the local constabulary; any one, indeed, who represents constituted authority, his traditional

Digitized by Google

enemy. Buenos Aires was always the seat of the oppressor, no matter who the oppressor happened to be. The gaucho represented the people of the soil as opposed to the hirelings of the tyrant much as Robin Hood did, for in the Argentine in the old days the government was too often literally and absolutely despotic, and thus the gaucho automatically became a hero. There was another stock figure in these plays through which the comedy element, or a large portion of it, was realized. This was an Italian born in the Argentine, but retaining many of his national characteristics, and usually, illogically enough, speaking an atrocious mixed dialect which was always provocative of much amusement. He was generally the "second villain." As nearly all of these plays end tragically, the villain triumphed, or seemed to, but his tool, the Italian, was made to "bite the dust" regularly. This satisfied the popular demand for a certain modicum of justice, and enabled the people to rejoice not only at the fall of an enemy, but of an Italian as well, and Italian influence, always strong in the Argentine, was not popular at that time. The Italian was the buffoon, and his part often included rough and tumble work of no mean description. Thus it will be seen that the *dramas criollos* became highly conventionalized both in content and in the matter of presentation with stock figures and with situations capable of development, but never of radical change.

The *dramas criollos* which were at first most effective were those which depicted the life and adventures of a real personage who had lived, and whose fame nearly reached the point of being glorious in the province of Buenos Aires, the largest and by far the most important in the republic. This was Juan Moreira, who was entirely representative of the gaucho of the Argentine pampas, and indeed of the gaucho in general. He was brave and daring, of great intelligence, a good horseman, and of a chivalrous disposition, but in

Digitized by Google

spite of this he was eternally hounded by the authorities, and again and again he fell a victim to the police of the country.

Needless to say he was a man who was always ready and efficient in defending his life against whatever number of his enemies confronted him. Hence, Juan Moreira came to be in a sense an incarnation of the Argentine peasant, of the poor, the homeless, the oppressed, this condition being forced upon him by the very government which he had served as a soldier, not only in the wars of the first epoch of Argentine history, but afterward in all their later struggles for liberty. He became in the eyes of all the people the apotheosis of the humble inhabitant sacrificed by the feudal lord of the nation in its period of semi-barbarism.

This was a theme near to the hearts of the masses, and one which they could readily understand, dealing as it did with their own lives and their own problems. It had been already treated by several poets, such as José Hernandez, who wrote in gaucho verse *Martín Fierro*,[1] by Rafael Obligado,[2] the author of the famous *Santos Vega*, in pure verse; or by Sarmiento, who made a sociological study of the bad gaucho in his book, *Facundo*.[3]

Juan Moreira was immortalized in the form of a novel by Eduardo Gutiérrez, a newspaper publisher by profession, but who had written novels at intervals. His works consist chiefly of romances woven about such themes as bandits and thieves, and the victim's blood spilled by the tyrant Rosas. However, in April, 1886, or thereabouts, the drama, *Juan Moreira*,[4] was presented for the first time in Chivilcoy. It

[1] The play *Martín Fierro* is attributed by Dr. David Peña to José Hernandez, and I have accepted this authority. On the other hand Rodolfo Fausto Rodriguez in his *Contribución al estudio del teatro nacional* names Dr. Elias Regules as the author. This question is taken up more fully in Note C at the end of this volume. (See also Note B.)

[2] See Note D in Appendix.

[3] See Note E in Appendix.

[4] See Note B in Appendix.

Digitized by Google

was written by Podestá at the suggestion of a friend, León Poupy, and it contained two acts and nine scenes. If the play in this form was ever even reduced to manuscript it certainly at least never reached the dignity of print. *Juan Moreira* was, not unnaturally, considering its instant and overwhelming popularity, the forerunner of others of its type. Soon there was a perfect influx of plays of the same character, some being founded on real persons, while others were wholly fictitious. Among the most famous of these plays are *Juan Moreira*, *Santos Vega*, *Pastor Luna*, and *Musolino*, the last being the title of the well-known Italian bandit. So marked and so wide-spread was the influence of these plays that in the neighboring country of Uruguay, on the further side of the Rio de la Plata, there was at this time an inundation of plays which were called *camperas*, and which were clearly modeled upon the *Juan Moreira* type of creole drama. I will return to the *dramas criollos* when I take up the separate plays in this volume for individual consideration, but it is enough to say now that the gaucho plays ran their course, and served their purpose in revitalizing the apparently defunct body of the drama, and were only superseded when the rapidly growing culture of the nation demanded in no uncertain tones something a trifle less naïve.

The *dramas criollos* were not such that upon them could be based the permanent dramatic literature of a nation. Indeed, they could not be considered truly as literature in the stylistic sense at all. It was interesting, and even important in its unique quality, and, had its crude edges ever been refined and polished, it might easily have become of high value as art. It was peculiarly indigenous, and vitally essential to the proper development of the country at the time, but in the very nature of things it could not exist forever. The Argentine has grown beyond it, and is too full of European influences to permit its retention. But it has

Digitized by Google

not been lost; it fulfilled its purpose well, and will long be remembered.

One of the most potent reasons for the next step in the evolution of the Argentine drama was the supply of artists and actors who were native Argentineans. The country had developed a language of its own, more or less, and the Spanish and Italian producers failed to satisfy the popular demand. The first period of the *dramas nacionales* had been imitative to a certain extent; this was no longer possible, and the nation demanded a drama of its own to take the place of the *dramas criollos*, which were no longer considered sufficiently cultivated to represent the state of civilization which had been reached by this time. But it was the *dramas criollos*, nevertheless, which made this next step possible.

In the security of having proper interpreters for their work, authors began to try their hands at a somewhat more elevated type of production than the famous creole plays, but they were still unable to produce drama which was really satisfying either from a literary or from a purely dramatic point of view. It cannot be said that they even equaled at this time the comedy of the first period, which was well represented by the plays of Onrubia, Coronado, García, and the two works of Peña, *Qué Dirá la Sociedad* and *La Lucha por la Vida*, written in pure verse, and given to the public in 1883 and 1885.

In the third phase of the *dramas nacionales* the outstanding figure is doubtless Don Enrique García Velloso, whose work both in quantity and in quality placed him first in the list of dramatists of this period. There was also produced at this time one work, the great popularity of which obtained the author a reputation almost overnight. This was *M'hijo el dotor*, by Don Florencio Sanchez, the plot of which is based upon life in the suburbs. It must be borne in mind that in Spanish America the slums of a city are usually on its outskirts, and thus the words slum and suburb carry somewhat

Digitized by Google

the same meaning. Sanchez cultivated this intermediate ground with great success, but when he endeavored to apply his talents to depicting life in educated circles he did not meet with the same result. It was also during this period that Dr. David Peña contributed several plays based upon episodes in the history of the Argentine. Among these were *Facundo*, presented in 1906 with great success, then later, *Dorrego*, and last, *Liniers*, a drama concerned with the life of the famous general of that name.

Therefore, starting at about 1902 we find that the production of dramatic literature in the Argentine had again taken on life, and was indeed very abundant, an effort having been made to substitute a more cultured atmosphere than that of the period immediately preceding. In this stimulated environment authors came to light whose works would grace the stage of any country, and whose names will one day reappear on the bill-boards.

This stage of development lasted only about ten years, however. The plays, though worthy, did not meet with the popular response necessary for their continuation, and the inevitable break came again, as it did after the first period of production. This time the reaction brought no such interesting and important development as the *dramas criollos*. The day of light social comedy had arrived, and everything gave way before it. All that was gaucho, as well as all that was intellectual, gave place to mirth, and superficiality of not a very high type reigned. This is more or less true today, for the next stage of development has not yet arrived. But one must not forget, in passing judgment, the youth and inheritance of the Argentine. What has been accomplished already is astonishing, considering the very short time that has passed since the beginning, and the peculiar circumstances which have attended the growth of the drama.

There is one man in particular to whom must be given credit

Digitized by Google

for what is really worth while in the present era of the Argentine drama. This is Florencio Parravicini, a young man of good family and of Italian extraction, who, possessed of many talents, succeeded in gaining the ear of the public in spite of opposition. The current of production has been diverted from its course largely by this author-actor-manager, who has in reality created a new school of his own. It is the heyday of light comedy in the Argentine, and this phase of the *dramas nacionales* must be allowed to run itself out before the new day dawns.

These modern light comedies have some features, however, which render them of interest. As I have said, they are nearly all plays of contemporary life, and by far the greater part of them are light satires. They are modern in form, their aim being to reflect the manners and mannerisms, the superficial idiosyncrasies of speech and custom of the great middle class. It is almost entirely a drama of externals, and the public goes to see itself pilloried and to laugh at its own foibles.

Many of the plays are written under somewhat the conditions which governed the writing of Elizabethan drama; that is, a play is written on Tuesday to be performed the following Monday, and by the next Wednesday it is either in stock or in the waste-paper basket. Seldom has a play a really long run; indeed the long run as we know it here is practically unknown in the Argentine. Occasionally, when a play has achieved great popularity, such as *Juan Moreira*, it is revived, but this is seldom.

The short interval between the writing and the production of a play necessitates the use of two prompters, one of whom is stationed in the prompter's box, down stage center, and the other in the wings. This last reads the script aloud a few lines ahead of the cast, who pick up their speeches from him as they go along, with the most amazing facility. Some-

Digitized by Google

times a cast will never even have read the play they are about to perform, and will hardly know whether it is a comedy or a tragedy until the fall of the curtain. It would seem that a production given in this fashion would be ragged enough, but this is not so. Long training has given the players such ease in their difficult task that if one did not know the true conditions beforehand one would never suspect them from the actual performance.

Parravicini, indeed, often improvises his pieces as he goes along, his quickness of wit and cleverness of invention making up for any discrepancies in structure. It is the Commedia del Arte over again! Parravicini is an immensely talented mimic, and one of his best parts is that of a foreigner speaking bad Argentine. So it is that the American colony will go one night to hear him imitate an American, and the Germans (though no more) will go the next to revel in his description of one of their countrymen in the throes of misunderstanding. Incidentally this modern comedy has developed the use of paper scenery rather interestingly.

Paper scenery is used very extensively in Italy and to a certain extent in France. One might think that it would not be durable, but a set so constructed will last for three or four seasons. It is certainly an immense saving for the manager in transportation when the scenery for an entire repertory season can be easily packed and carried in two or three trunks. Cloth absorbs paint, while paper does not, so that the effect of light on the pigments is somewhat different. The colors seem to be more brilliant, more alive, reflecting the light instead of permitting it to sink in. Obviously this has its advantages, and its disadvantages as well. Every company has stock frames on which the paper is lightly tacked, and, as it is trimmed with a rough cloth at the edges, it will really stand a great deal of wear and tear. Paper scenery has been tried in this country as well, but the

Digitized by Google

fire laws prohibit its use almost everywhere now, rather foolishly it seems, for it is but little more inflammable than cloth. With the use of paper, however, many realistic effects which are common with us cannot be obtained, and to see an American actor trying to slam a paper door on the Argentine stage is almost a tragedy in itself. But with the doing away with realistic treatment on the modern stage, the effort to suggest rather than to represent, the use of paper scenery offers many interesting solutions to the producer of today. It seems to me probable that the use of this scenery was brought to the Argentine by those Italians who came over early in the history of the country, and who form so essential an element in the *dramas criollos*. Surely the "serpent's tooth" was never more in evidence than here!

Besides Parravicini, another of the successful authors of the day is Gregorio Laferrere, who has at least three pronounced hits to his credit: *Locos de Verano*, *Las de Barranco*, and *Jettatore*. The titles themselves suggest the type of play: The Follies of Summer, from flirting to puns on straw hats; The Women of Barranco, the story of the family of a famous general, who, after his death, lived on the strength of his fame, and Bad Luck, which always explains itself. Most of these are played at the Teatro Apollo, or the Moderno, while Parravicini holds forth exclusively at the Teatro Argentino. All three of these theaters are in Buenos Aires, and, indeed, the drama performed nowadays outside the capital city itself is comparatively scarce.

There are some thirty theaters in the Argentine which are open all the year round, and in 1916 the income from these was some two million dollars. It may seem to us of the north that this is not a great sum nor a vast array of playhouses for the dramatic interests of a nation, but it is well not to forget that ten years or so ago the entire population of the Argentine numbered a bit less than the population

Digitized by Google

of New York City today. There is no theater in the world more beautiful and more complete than the great Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, with its seating capacity of 3,500 and its extra room for 1,000 standees. This is where the opera is given, and it is probable that there is no finer opera to be found. It may not be out of place to devote some space to certain phases of opera in the Argentine just here, for this form of entertainment has diverted many thousands of dollars from its precursor, the theater.

As in many cities of South America the semi-tropical weather naturally affects operatic conditions, and many municipal theaters and opera-houses are built rather on the plan of summer gardens. In such instances the perfect quiet, which, if not inspired, is always demanded by music, is obtained by laws which affect the traffic. Within a radius of several blocks of the opera-house the streets are paved with special material to deaden the sound, and regulations affecting the conduct of individuals within the immediate vicinity are rigidly enforced. These regulations are similar in effect to our own which govern the streets on which schools and hospitals are located.

All Spanish-American opera-houses are under the direction of the municipality. A grand-opera commission is appointed in much the same way as we appoint a commission in our economic or political organization. The opera-house itself is, as a rule, leased to some individual who may or may not be an impresario or manager. Often this person is simply in favor with the local government, and thereby obtains the concession through political standing. This, however, never interferes with the general progress of the grand-opera season which, in the case of Buenos Aires, is at its height during the months of May, June, July, and a part of August.

The general procedure with operatic productions is to appoint an expert to go to Europe and select the artists,

Digitized by Google

choruses, costumes, scenery, accessories, and all the miscellaneous accouterments which are required for the production of the season's work. This expert has the power to engage and contract for every detail, from music scores to call-boys. The transportation of the entire company from Milan, for instance, to the Argentine is paid for both ways. One can readily see what work and expense this entails, especially when scarcely a single chorus dancer or ballet girl comes across the sea without her mother or her sisters and, in the case of those who are married, the husband or wife and all the children. This means that in an opera company of one hundred people there may easily be two hundred extra as entourage. A striking feature of these companies is that the musicians are not engaged in Europe; the directors are, but the orchestra itself is not.

While the agent or expert is busily engaged in Europe the commissioner is campaigning for subscriptions to make up the amount of money required for a certain number of productions during the season. The city itself, of course, subsidizes the opera-house, but the people are still further called upon to support the music they demand by subscriptions, and be it said that right royally they do so.

There is a distinct social side to the opera season in the Argentine which is akin to the social features evidenced in the continental Sunday. The Sunday matinée performances at the Teatro Colon bring together an assemblage which in wealth, brilliancy, and atmosphere rivals any operatic gathering in the world. Right upon the heels of this grandeur, however, on Sunday night, there are popular performances at popular prices for "the people."

It was in the Teatro Colon that Caruso sang long before we here knew that there was such a man or such a voice. Nor is he by any means the only singer who has come to us after he had delighted the Argentine. It was in the Teatro Colon

Digitized by Google

that Bonci, Amato, Plançon, Matzenauer, Tetrazzini, and Martinelli first sang publicly in the western hemisphere. In Buenos Aires there is the largest Italian colony outside of New York and Naples, and to these half-million Italians is due in large part the remarkable success of the great operatic season.

And now that we have swung all round the circle let us "return to our muttons" or, in a word, to the *dramas criollos* with which this book is chiefly concerned. Knowing their relationships and antecedents as we now do, and having painted in the background of our picture, we may perhaps be able to see this native drama more clearly and in better perspective.

I have spoken of the *dramas criollos* in the past tense, and perhaps I have been wrong to do so. Their heyday, however, was that period when they occupied the second half of an evening's performance, the first half being consumed by circus feats and vaudeville acts. But when the gaucho drama was taken from its native environment and played in the larger cities it became in some wise as stiff as a cowboy in a dress shirt. Even then, however, it was saved from entire failure by its verve, dash, intensity of action, and most of all by its entire naïveté which rose superior to the artificial restrictions imposed upon it. Its appeal was fundamental and national, and hence could never be entirely lost.

But the really native drama of the Argentine is fast fading from its stage. Importations and a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan outlook have killed it; the country has developed beyond it, and it is seldom spoken of except with a tolerant smile. Indeed, when the critics of the Argentine write of the *dramas criollos* the smile changes to a grin of rage, and they demand that it be buried and forgotten. After all, this is inevitable and quite as it should be, yet one cannot but regret the past. So often do we find that the false has

Digitized by Google

driven out the true, that the artificial has been substituted for the natural, and that native work is frowned upon as unworthy, in contrast to the tawdry novelties dragged in from abroad. I speak now no more of the Argentine than of the United States. We are all tarred with the same brush. The *dramas criollos* may still be found in the outlying districts, and upon occasion within the capital city itself, but it is not as it once was, nor will it ever be.

The word *criollo* or creole may require a little elucidation. It is much more than a mere modifying adjective signifying native or creole. It is more as when we in New York City speak of the Metropolitan police. Metropolitan becomes a noun on the instant with a most exact connotation, and *criollo* must be considered in precisely the same way. It is of the soil of the Argentine peculiarly and utterly, and yet it does not convey the sense of being plebeian any more than our Knickerbocker or Mayflower stock does. One may use it in connection with either a grandee or a peasant.

Here then, with the *dramas criollos* is, or was, an indigenous drama in the most strict, though not the most absolute sense. The very isolation which gave it birth militated against its becoming widely known in other countries. Any influence that it might have had upon drama as a whole is rather more than problematical, but it is certainly deserving of a place in dramatic history. English drama developed from the church and the miracle play, as Greek drama developed from the sacred mysteries; I know of no other drama than that of the Argentine which has found its inception in the sawdust ring.

Of the three plays in this volume two have been selected because they represent the *drama criollo* at their best. They are perhaps the most famous in all the category of gaucho plays, and carry as do no others the very spirit of the pampas. These are *Juan Moreira* and *Santos Vega*. The third play, *La Montaña de las Brujas*, or The Witches' Mountain, is

Digitized by Google

generally considered in the Argentine as marking the last milestone in the epoch before the advent of the present decline, which is signified by the Europeanized farcical comedies. These three plays, in the order mentioned, mark three steps of sophistication in treatment and of development in form.

The reader who has come so far with me may have observed what must have seemed to be a contradiction as to the authorship of the play *Juan Moreira*. This I may be able to clear somewhat if I cannot entirely dispel it.

The first literary record we have of *Juan Moreira* is in the novel by that name by Eduardo Gutiérrez. Mr. Alfred Coester makes the statement that Gutiérrez then dramatized one of the episodes in his own novel, and that this dramatization was put on the stage in pantomimic form by Podestá. On the other hand my own statement that the dramatization was made by Podestá himself at the suggestion of Poupy is reinforced by Rodolfo Fausto Rodriguez in his work, *Contribución al estudio del teatro nacional*. What the exact fact of the matter is I confess I do not know. There was so much informality attendant upon the earlier gaucho plays that instead of records we have conjecture, and instead of history we have surmise. Most of these plays were written either wholly or partly in verse, and from this has sprung the habit of some commentators of speaking of the plays as "poems." That would be well enough were it not for the fact that many of the plays are dramatized versions of actual poems, which served almost as substitutes for the novel in the earlier days of Argentine literature. The result is that the original poems and the later plays are sometimes hopelessly confused.

The version of *Juan Moreira* which I have used in this volume is by Silverio Manco and is probably simply a rewriting of the old material or a transcription of the old play. The original play was never printed, so far as I have been able to ascertain, and doubtless this undated version by

Digitized by Google

Manco represents the effort to reduce the Argentine classic to paper for the first time. The original *Juan Moreira* contained two acts and nine scenes, it is said. Manco's version, which I have used perforce, contains but six scenes, and this gives rise to several interesting conjectures.

In all probability the original *Juan Moreira* was a fairly crude piece of work. If Gutiérrez wrote it, the fact that he was a novelist and not a playwright would explain the very shaky construction of the piece from a dramatic standpoint, while if Podestá did the work the fact of his humble origin and subsequent environment would likewise explain the lack of literary polish the play contains. Both these suggestions are made on the supposition that Manco's play is merely a transcription of the older *Juan Moreira*. On the other hand there are several notably weak spots in Manco's work which may be accounted for most easily, whether it be the fact or not, by remembering that this play is three scenes shorter than the other. Are there then three scenes actually missing from this version or is this an entirely new play responsible itself alone for its own weaknesses and defects? I do not know, but of one thing I am assured, and that is that Manco's play is very faithful to the original poem in atmosphere, color, and general trend. Its very crudeness of dialogue and of action leads me to believe in its close resemblance to the original, but I cannot account for certain deformities of construction or for the three missing scenes. For instance:

What has *Juan* done to make him a *matrero* or gaucho outlaw? If he is an outlaw and in fear of his life why, then, does he return and put his head in the noose? And why, when *Don Francisco* has every reason, apparently, for wishing *Juan* out of the way, does he merely have him beaten and set free? Again, there is absolutely nothing which leads up to or suggests the fact of *Vicenta's* infidelity until the direct accusation comes. It would certainly seem that there is

Digitized by Google

something missing here. The first speech of *Juan's* comes like a bolt from a blue sky, without rhyme or reason. And then *Juan* follows this by speaking of the man who has just left *Vicenta*. What man? We hear nothing of him before or after. The setting for the last act or scene is totally unexplained. Where is this "courtyard" or patio, and what are the persons of the play doing there? Where did *Vicenta* come from? Where did *Andrade* come from, and why was he found bound? In truth, there are so many questions that might be asked, and so many discrepancies which are unaccounted for that the task is a hopeless one. We can but take much for granted, and read what we are able to find between the lines. As for the date and place of the first production of the play, those have already been given. Whatever else we may say of the *Juan Moreira* of this volume we are at least perfectly safe in the knowledge that it is faithful to the spirit, if not to the letter of the original. And after all that is the most important thing. In several instances I have added words and phrases to the stage directions, though never to the text.

In the exact and literal sense *Santos Vega*, famous as it is, is not a *drama criollo* at all. The play was written by Luis Bayon Herrera, a young Spaniard living in the Argentine. It is a dramatized version of the poem by Obligado, or rather it is a mixture of this poem with the old native legend of the *payador*. Jean Paul, the Argentine critic, in his book *El Teatro Argentino* questions the ability of Herrera to use the dialect of the gaucho with success, but there is certainly no question but that he has been distinctly successful in imitating the older *dramas criollos* both in form and in language. It is a better, a more sophisticated form, lacking as it does the crudeness of the old gaucho plays. This simply renders it more artistically worthy, without in the least violating its right to be considered as a *drama nacional*,

Digitized by Google

if not exactly a *drama criollo*. Jean Paul, who is the dramatic critic of *La Nación*, the principal newspaper of Buenos Aires, and whose name is Don Juan Pablo Echagüe, seems to think that *Juan Sin Ropa* (literally, *John Without Clothes*) is a Spanish conception, and indeed goes so far as to assume that he is a Spaniard come to conquer the land for civilization. I do not believe, myself, that Herrera intended in the least any political allusion, the more so as the original legend states plainly that *Santos* was beaten in a contest with *Satan* and died of a broken heart. True, Obligado in his poem invests this character with some mystery (*Juan* finally turns into a serpent, and coils about the trunk of a burning tree) and calls him by the extraordinary appellation of *Juan Sin Ropa*. Herrera has simply combined these two, so that now the Devil and *Juan Sin Ropa* are one and the same.

The play was produced for the first time on June 5th, 1913, at El Teatro Nuevo in Buenos Aires. The audience received it most enthusiastically, and it at once became an established success, and passed without more ado into the dramatic literature of the country.

Herrera has employed all the old materials of the gaucho drama—the descriptive scenes of country life, the singing contest, the fight with the police, and the heroic patriotism of the gaucho—and he has utilized them well and truly. The theme has been handled by others in various forms. Jean Paul speaks of one Hernandez, and Rodriguez alludes to a dramatic form of *Santos Vega* by Nosiglia. The legend belongs to the folklore of the Argentine, and as such is open to use by every one.

The translation imitates very closely the original Spanish, though, as is often necessary in translation, the actual words have sometimes been sacrificed to the spirit of the text. The rhyme scheme is exactly like the original. Most gaucho songs seem to be sung in verses of ten lines each, called décimas, and

Digitized by Google

rhymed as they are here. Incidentally it may interest the reader to know that these translations have been tried with gaucho music, and it has been found that they fit perfectly.

It is needless to call attention to or to attempt to apologize for the rhetorical flourishes with which *Santos Vega* is adorned. The love scenes may seem a bit flowery, and there is not a little of bombast from time to time. But these are wholly in character, and are entirely typical of the country and the literature of their origin, and to the one who views them with sympathetic understanding they are beautiful rather than otherwise, if only because of their earnest sincerity. These plays are totally free from superficial or self-conscious attributes. Of course, just as *Juan Sin Ropa* is symbolic of the Devil, or of civilization, or of both (there is little to choose between them) so is *Santos Vega's* sweetheart, *Argentina*, symbolic of the land of the rolling pampas. *Santos* and *Argentina*, the gaucho and the Argentine, they are one, and when one dies the heart of the other is broken forever.

The improvised songs of the gaucho, with which *Santos Vega* is so plentifully adorned, find a parallel, albeit a rather crude one, in the chants of both the French Canadians and the negro. Here, for instance, is a verse from one of the old Canuck songs. This type of song was given by the director of the dance (I do not know how to designate him otherwise), and was often sung without accompaniment of any kind except that of a stamp of the foot and a clap of the hands to beat out the time.

"With a dee and a dong, and a diddy iddy dong,
With a dee, and a diddy, and a dong!
That man over there in zee black moustache,
Balance wiz ze couple on his right!
Ze couple below do just ze same—
With a dee, and a diddy, and a dong!"

Digitized by Google

Mr. Stuart Walker has told of an early experience of his which bears some relation to this.

"Suddenly I heard a voice singing in the darkness: 'The linchpin fell out of the chariot wheel, and Pharaoh he got drowned!' So I went out of my house and, looking across, I saw a great fire, and seated about it several hundred negroes, black as the ace of spades, and seated in front of the fire was a negro king, telling this story: 'And the linchpin fell out of the chariot wheel, and Pharaoh he got drowned!' And he was acting it out; that is, I was seeing a ballad made right before my eyes. Presently the negroes in the crowd took the story up, and each man began to work it out in his own way. That simple story lasted fully an hour, each man interpreting it to suit himself. You could see the Egyptian hosts, and you could see the chariot wheels swerve and turn in the sand."

This is of course a very primitive type of somewhat the same sort of thing that we find in the *dramas criollos*, but it is not entirely unconnected with it, nevertheless.

While *Santos Vega* could certainly never achieve anything like a popular success on our own stage, partaking as it does of the faults of its virtues, it is, on the other hand, sufficiently actable to suggest the possibility of putting it on for a short run as an interesting and worthy example of a somewhat rare type of play. It has as much right to a place in our theater, and it has much more real importance as drama, than *The Bonds of Interest*, by Jacinto Benavente, which the Theater Guild produced for a limited run in the spring of 1919. At any rate it would be a fascinating experiment.

La Montaña de Brujas, or *The Witches' Mountain*, by Julio Sanchez Gardel, was presented for the first time on September 13th, 1912, at the Teatro Nuevo in Buenos Aires. The critic, Jean Paul, writing of it at the time of its production, thought it "colorful, but not very real drama of the mountaineers,"

Digitized by Google

He liked other plays by the same author better—*Las Campanas, Después de Misa, Noche de Luna.* But the more popular point of view is well represented by Sr. Alfredo A. Bianchi who says in an article in *Nosotros,* "After the riotous success of *La Montaña de Brujas* began the decadence of the national theater." Sr. Bianchi says again in lamenting the passing away of the national drama, "We are now (1916) at a literary cross-road. The playwrights know not which way to turn." But almost in the same breath he remarks that the gaucho has left the stage for good, and that it is "good riddance." I have included the play in this collection because it very evidently marks the turning-point. It was, in fact, the last good play of the period of the national drama, after which came the comedies. Frequent mention of the play will be found in Argentine dramatic criticism of the day, and its place in the body of contemporary drama is both strong and significant.

As is not unusual, this play is spoken of as a "dramatic poem," although it is written entirely in prose, albeit rather beautiful prose. As I have remarked before, this custom is a pitfall for the unwary, and even the more experienced tracker in the jungle of Spanish-American literature may have cause to regret the usage. *The Witches' Mountain* is in three acts, there is no change of scene, and but one day is consumed by the action. In construction and in expression it is far and away the most highly developed of the three plays included here, and it should be readily actable on any stage.

The Witches's Mountain is not a gaucho play in the sense that *Juan Moreira* and *Santos Vega* are; it does not deal, so far as I know, with any traditional phase of life in the Argentine, nor is it based on any legend. Indeed, whereas the gaucho is the habitant of the pampas, this play is set in the mountain country, and depicts an even more isolated existence than that of the plains. It is, however, thoroughly

Digitized by Google

atmospheric and colorful, and it is true to these qualities. It is rugged, brutal, cruel to a degree, and yet it is far from crude. *Don Tadeo*, cursed with the evil eye, and his vile son *Daniel* are strange types, but they are not unusual. *Leon* is in strong contrast to these two, and his terrible cry at the climax of the play, "Father . . . I am the condor! I am the condor! I am the condor!" is not at all far removed from the ghastly muttering of Oswald in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. "Mother, give me the sun . . . The sun—the sun." *Inda* stands between these two elements and only succumbs to *Daniel* when she has been drugged. I am in some doubt as to whether this drug is supposed to represent the more poetic love potion or whether it is simply a narcotic. In all probability, the latter. In this case, however, *Inda's* psychology in the last act becomes rather subtle, but it may be more apparent to the Latin than to the Anglo-Saxon. The finale of the play is excellent. The northern dramatist would probably have permitted himself either to save *Inda* altogether, if he could not save *Leon* with her, or to dash both *Inda* and *Daniel* to pieces on the rocks of the gorge. As it is, it is a blank, terrific tragedy, poignant with horror and merciless in dénouement. Devoid as the play is in the original of the patois of the gaucho, true in atmosphere, and strong in dramatic effect, *La Montaña de Brujas* is indeed a fitting climax to the period of the *dramas nacionales* and to this book as well.

There remains little more to be said, but if the reader has followed me so far it is to be hoped that his patience has at least been rewarded with a somewhat better understanding of the general development of the drama of a great country, and of one of its more peculiar phases in particular. The day of the gaucho is past. *Juan Sin Ropa*, dressed in the guise of a foreigner, has given him his death-blow, and over his fallen body *Argentina* is bowed in grief. But the glory

Digitized by Google

that was his remains; in song, story, and in drama he has become immortal. His dreams, his traditions, and the legends that surround his memory will not succumb to the attacks of time as those more mortal attributes have done, for they have been clothed in the undying body of art. This book, this path-breaker, is most notable, perhaps, for what it has, perforce, left unsaid. From time to time some light comes into the jungle along the trail, but on either side the heavy trees cast their shadows for many miles. In the past those trails which were cut were too often left to be overgrown, but I have ridden for hundreds of miles through South America over paved trails laid down by the conquistadores in the time of Pizarro, Cortez, and de Soto. It is well that we should know something of the vast civilization which extends south of our own borders, not only for the sake of its intrinsic value, but because of our kinship with it. We may be proud of it not solely as Argentine, but because it is, as we are, American.

EDWARD HALE BIERSTADT.

Nov. 1st, 1919.
New York City.

Digitized by Google

JUAN MOREIRA

A NATIONAL DRAMA OF LIFE ON THE PAMPAS IN TWO ACTS AND SIX SCENES

By SILVERIO MANCO

Digitized by Google

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

JUAN MOREIRA, *an humble gaucho*
VICENTA, *his wife*
JUANCITO, *their son*
TATA VIEJO, *an elderly gaucho*
DON FRANCISCO, *Alcalde of Lobos*[1]
JULIAN ANDRADE, *Moreira's friend*
SARDETI, *a miserly and lying pulpero*[2]
A SERGEANT OF THE CONSTABULARY
GAUCHOS, GUITAR PLAYERS, *AND* CONSTABLES

TITLES OF THE SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: *Injustice!* SCENE TWO: *Alone!*
SCENE THREE: *In the Stocks*

ACT TWO

SCENE FOUR: *Fatality!* SCENE FIVE: *Dishonored!*
SCENE SIX: *Conquered!*

[1] Alcalde is a local magistrate corresponding somewhat to justice of the peace.
[2] Pulpero: a sort of grocer.

Digitized by Google

JUAN MOREIRA

ACT ONE

Scene One

A hut with a door and a window in the background. On the right a table upon which a candle stuck into the neck of a bottle. On the left, a cot. In the center, hugging the fire, are Vicenta *and* Tata Viejo. Juancito *is asleep on the cot. It is night.*

Tata Viejo. It's useless, my child; when everything is against you and misfortune tosses you against the wall on your back it leaves you flatter than a pancake.

Vicenta. Yes, Tata; when I married Juan I thought that all my troubles were at an end, and that there would be nothing but joy and happiness left. But it wasn't so. [*Weeps.*

Tata Viejo. The miserable law hounds Juan because they think he's a murderer. [*Weeps*] Bah! I wish I were twenty years younger—I'd give that scoundrel Don Francisco a good whipping. Poor Juan! Just on account of that good-for-nothing he must hide out on the pampas with never a chance to kiss his wife or hug his boy, or even to embrace this poor old man who is dying of sorrow at the very thought of him. Curse the law for treating the gauchos of the Argentine so miserably!

Vicenta. Don't remind me of those things, Tata, for they hurt me terribly. I'm afraid I'll go mad with despair. Every time Don Francisco's face comes to my mind it seems as if I

Digitized by Google

saw my poor Juan with his head in the stocks. Why couldn't I have died at birth instead of suffering all this unhappiness?

TATA VIEJO. Very well, my child; call Juancito and tell him to give us some bitters to sweeten our sorrow.

VICENTA. Tata, I'm sure the police will kill my Juan and that I'll never see him again.

TATA VIEJO. Very well, I say. . . . Call the boy. Juan isn't so ungrateful. He'll try to give the police the slip, and look in on the people the law made him desert in order to save his life. Call the boy, my child.

VICENTA. [*Rises and wakes the child*] Juancito! Juancito!

JUANCITO. [*Sitting up*] Mamita!. . .

VICENTA. Get up! You've already slept too long.

TATA VIEJO. Yes, little puppy; get up and make Tata Viejo some maté.[1]

JUANCITO. [*Getting down from the cot*] Where is my papito?

VICENTA. Your papito? My poor boy! Your papito has gone, and nobody knows if he'll ever come back.

TATA VIEJO. Come here, little puppy; give me a hug and kiss, and then go to the window and ask the murmuring pampero[2] to carry them both to your papito.

JUANCITO. But where *is* Papito?

TATA VIEJO. Poor little puppy! Come, get me the maté and then I'll tell you.

JUANCITO. No, tell me now.

VICENTA. Don't be stubborn, son. Do what you're told.

JUANCITO. All right, I'll do it. [*He starts to prepare the maté.*

TATA VIEJO. My heart aches so I can hardly stand it. I don't know why, but it seems to tell me that Juan is coming, and . . . who knows but what he is?

VICENTA. I don't think it's possible, Tata. Besides, he

[1] Maté: the Argentine substitute for tea.
[2] Pampero: the wind on the pampas.

Digitized by Google

would have sent somebody to let us know that he was coming to this unhappy place.

TATA VIEJO. How you talk! Perhaps he wanted to surprise us, and so sent no messenger.

VICENTA. Hark! I hear a galloping horse. I wonder if it's he?

TATA VIEJO. Happy little puppy—here comes your papito!

DON FRANCISCO. [*Outside*] Since you have had the temerity to scorn me, Vicenta, I'll see to it that that little gaucho of yours comes to grief. You shall stay in seclusion with neither his love nor mine, and when he steps out to meet my men all his reputation as a brave man will be as nothing to my power for revenge.

VICENTA. He! The traitor! The murderer!

JUANCITO. Mamita! Mamita!

TATA VIEJO. And still he comes to mock you; the dog!

DON FRANCISCO. All his galloping about is useless. He can't escape me, for I have stretched the rope for him, and he's bound to get tangled up in it. I sha'n't stop until he is in my power. I'm going to catch him, and then he'll pay with his body for the way you have insulted me. After that . . . you shall be mine!

VICENTA. Tata!

JUANCITO! Mamita!

TATA VIEJO. What does this mean?

VICENTA. Tata, I am dying of sorrow. [*Swoons in his arms.*

TATA VIEJO. Vicenta, my poor child The scoundrel is already avenged.

DON FRANCISCO. [*Entering furiously with four soldiers*] Hush, you old mule; if you keep on braying like that you'll find yourself in the stocks alongside of Juan Moreira.

JUANCITO. Please don't hurt them!

TATA VIEJO. All this bluster won't help you a bit. You'll pay with your head for all the harm you've done. Come

Digitized by Google

on, then, coward! So you tremble before an old man? It would disgust me to kill you, that's why I don't do it. But you'll carry *something* to remember me by.

[*He attacks* DON FRANCISCO. *The soldiers seize and hold* TATA VIEJO

TATA VIEJO [*Struggling*] Leave this house, cowards! . . . Dogs! Would you harm an old man? . . .

Rapid Curtain

SCENE TWO

Open country. Trees in the distance. In the center a large ombú with abundant foliage, beneath which, recumbent upon a saddle, is JUAN MOREIRA. He is deep in thought.

MOREIRA. Curse the luck! Ah, Don Francisco, Don Francisco! It's useless for you to hound me this way. You'll have a hard time of it if you think you are going to catch me. Your plans are bound to fail, and you'll be throttled by your own vengeance. Vicenta is too strong ever to give herself into your arms, for your love disgusts her and your person inspires her with a mortal hatred. As for you, you dog, the cause of all my misfortune, it won't be long before you'll find yourself spitted on my dirk. It's through you that I have had to leave my son and Vicenta and dear Tata Viejo who used to give me so much good advice. Bah! A gaucho who is born honest must always be so. The curse of fate is always with me; the wind of misfortune tosses my black locks; the breeze of ill luck whines past me in a fury, leaving contempt and curses in its wake. Still, I must ride the pampas on my good nag and finish like a man what is in my heart. Vengeance lights my way, and I must drink deep of it in order to accomplish mine as I long to . . . hand to hand and face

Digitized by Google

to face with my enemy. Alone! Alone! Without even a friend! The neighing of my horse is the only consolation I have in my sorrow. Out on the pampas I awake at dawn flat on my belly over my saddle, and watch the morning come with all its little noises and the glad awakening of those who are happy and live quietly by the warmth of their firesides. While I, a poor gaucho, buffeted by fate and hunted by the police, am like a tree, leafless in the luxuriant springtime of life, and lashed by passing winds that leave upon its brow the evil mark whose curse is sculptured there as the sign of a murderer. Yes! The law pursues me merely because it happens to wish to, and if tomorrow I should become a real criminal disgusted with this wretched existence, the law alone would be to blame. For it was the law that drove me to this road where only sadness, deception, bitterness, and grief are found. Don Francisco! Don Francisco! [*Weeps*] Eh? I hear a horse coming this way. [*Gets up in surprise.*

Enter JULIAN ANDRADE *on his horse. He dismounts and approaches* JUAN

ANDRADE. Excuse me, friend, and don't be alarmed. I am no spy nor policeman, or anything of the sort. I am a poor, honest gaucho whose only fortune is a stout heart. The playful breeze that rustles over the pampas brought to my ear the whisper of a great grief, of a deep sorrow. It told me in its mysterious language, in accents of sorrowful passion, of the sad misfortune of a humble and hard-working gaucho. I could see that you were thoughtful and sad, and suddenly I remembered Juan Moreira. Aren't you Juan Moreira?

MOREIRA. Yes, my friend, I am Juan Moreira. I am that humble and hard-working gaucho. And here I am, in the midst of this great plain, this bit of beautiful pampa, the cradle of my most sacred memories. I am a fugitive from justice and dodging the footsteps of the constabulary.

ANDRADE. The plague take the law! Because of it one has

Digitized by Google

to fly about like a lost dove. Nowadays the police frown upon a gaucho because they think he's a murderer.

MOREIRA. You are right, my friend. The confounded law perverts us and forces us toward the brink of the abyss, with never a thought to our finer feelings.

ANDRADE. Your bitterness moves me. From now on you may count upon me as a friend who is as ready as the stroke of an axe and stronger than tala wood.

MOREIRA. Many thanks, good friend. I accept the privilege because I see that you are honest and stout of heart.

ANDRADE. Julian Andrade offers himself to you as a brother. Come, Moreira, it deserves an embrace. [*They embrace.*

MOREIRA. The pampas sleep quietly, and everything is hushed. Probably the damned police are preparing a trap.

ANDRADE. We'll have to fight them until we either win or die; and we must have the courage to withstand. We'll saddle our horses that are pawing the ground over there and get ready like two brave horsemen.

MOREIRA. I must mount and ride like the devil. They must be waiting anxiously for me at the Alcalde's.

ANDRADE. [*In surprise*] At the Alcalde's?

MOREIRA. Yes; Sardeti will be missing me.

ANDRADE. Sardeti?

MOREIRA. He's my enemy. I've brought suit against him to recover some money that he has owed me for a long time, for if I don't get it I'll never be able to live in peace.

ANDRADE. The horses are whinnying, Moreira. Good-by, good friend Juan, and good luck to you.

MOREIRA. We'll meet again, comrade.

ANDRADE. I leave you my heart.

[*He throws himself on his horse and rides off.*

MOREIRA. Until we meet again, my friend. [*Looks about him*] Alone . . . with my bad luck and fatal misfortune! I wish I were dead. Even the grave attracts me. Tata Viejo!

Digitized by Google

Vicenta! My dear little puppy! How I suffer! . . . How unhappy I am! O breeze that rustles so sweetly over the pampas, go tell my people that I send them my heart. And then, with all your brave cunning whisper to that traitor that the avenging of my sorrows will be all the more terrible for this.

[Lifting his hands to his face, he falls prostrate.

Rapid Curtain

SCENE THREE

The office of the village ALCALDE. On the right, the stocks.[1] *On the left, down stage, a table with writing materials. Further up stage, several chairs in a row. A door in the background. DON FRANCISCO is seated at the table, writing. Two CONSTABLES guard the door.*

DON FRANCISCO. Very good. Let us see if that vile gaucho's accusation against Sardeti is true. I pity him if his testimony proves to be false. Tears and supplications will avail him nothing. To the stocks with him, and that's the end of it. What does he think? Now I'll be able to avenge myself for the insult he gave me by robbing me of my Vicenta's love. I shall take pleasure in revenge! It will be a source of real satisfaction to be able to take revenge on this vile and quarrelsome gaucho who struts about here and puts on more airs than a fighting-cock. [*Consults his watch*] They ought to be here soon. Yet, if I'm not mistaken, he may not show up. I haven't much faith in the fellow. Sardeti is a friend of mine, so I don't think he will miss such an important meeting. [*Some one knocks. To the constables*] See who it is.

A CONSTABLE. [*Looking out*] It's Sardeti.

DON FRANCISCO. Let him in.

[1] These are the standing stocks, like a whipping-post.

Digitized by Google

Enter SARDETI, *who speaks with an Italian accent*

SARDETI. Eef you please. Hello, Don Francisco.

DON FRANCISCO. Hello, my friend. How goes it? Take a seat.

SARDETI. [*Seating himself*] We are half mad.

DON FRANCISCO. Why? Tell me.

SARDETI. Why? Why is it that they have sent for me?

DON FRANCISCO. *I* sent for you because the gaucho they call Juan Moreira has presented himself here with a claim against you for a certain sum that he says you owe him.

SARDETI [*Excitedly*] That is a lie, Signor Alcaldo. I owe to this man a sum of moneys? No, no! That is a lie, and I tell you so again.

DON FRANCISCO. Then it isn't true that you owe Juan Moreira ten thousand pesos?

SARDETI. Not one peso I owe to him!

DON FRANCISCO. [*Shrugging*] But, my friend, did you ever see such a shameless fellow? To come and laugh in one's face. That can't be done! As soon as the insolent wretch comes in we'll stick his head in the stocks without more ado. Friend Sardeti, I have wanted to get rid of this fellow for a long time. He has offended me unpardonably, and has left a tremendous wound in my heart. But I shall be avenged! [*A knock is heard at the door. To the constables*] See who it is.

A CONSTABLE. [*Looking out*] It's Moreira.

DON FRANCISCO. Let him in.

Enter MOREIRA

MOREIRA. [*With dignity*] A very good day to you all.

DON FRANCISCO. [*Smoothly*] Sit down, friend Moreira, and tell me straight why you came to tell such a big lie in respect to the suit you have brought against Sardeti.

MOREIRA. Lie nothing, Don Francisco! Everything I said was the absolute truth; and besides, I don't think an honest gaucho like me would lie.

Digitized by Google

DON FRANCISCO. My friend Sardeti here tells me that he owes you nothing, and that he was consequently very much put out by having to come here on your account.

MOREIRA. He says he doesn't owe me anything?

SARDETI. Not one peso!

MOREIRA. [*To* SARDETI] Ah, scoundrel! So you refuse me the ten thousand pesos I loaned you? We'll face this out later if my luck doesn't kill me. Is this what justice is made of? Curse the justice that harbors murderers and thieves!

DON FRANCISCO. [*To* SARDETI] Very good, my friend; you may go. [*To* MOREIRA] As for you— [*To the constables*] Here, you! To the stocks with this man, and give him fifty lashes.

[MOREIRA, *struggling desperately, is placed in the stocks, and is whipped.* SARDETI *whispers something in the* ALCALDE'S *ear and then departs.*

MOREIRA. [*Writhing with pain*] Ah! Sardeti, Sardeti! You'll pay your debt in your own blood!

DON FRANCISCO. Suck on that for the present. This is the way we shall fix you so you won't tell any more lies about persons more respectable than yourself. You may go now, and if you have any hankering after more, you may return.

[MOREIRA *is removed from the stocks and prepares to take his departure.*

MOREIRA. [*As he draws his shirt over his bleeding back*] You'll pay me for this, Don Francisco, and that soon. We shall meet . . . hand to hand and face to face!

Rapid Curtain

Digitized by Google

ACT TWO

SCENE FOUR

SARDETI'S *pulpería*.[1] *Several* GUITAR PLAYERS *strum their instruments.* SARDETI *is behind the counter, quietly smoking.*

SARDETI. Let's see, my friend, if you can sing the good song.

GUITAR PLAYER. If my first string doesn't break—

SARDETI. How can it break? When you make vibrate the string it is as though the lark of the pampas were singing.

GUITAR PLAYER. I'd hardly say that, Sardeti.

SARDETI. Very good. Please to sing me the pretty verse.

GUITAR PLAYER. All right—as long as you put it that way, I'll give you the pleasure of hearing me, comrade.

SARDETI. Do not wait no more, comrade, for I have a wish to hear the lark.

GUITAR PLAYER. Good! Listen—[*Sings*]

Good gentlemen, I pray give ear,
And harken to this sad lament
Which from a heart with sorrow spent,
Arises wet with many a tear.
I dedicate it to all here.
This song is born in sorrow and pain,
With never a thought of honor to gain.
I breathe it to the sound of strings.
A novice, I, and one who sings
For love of song, to entertain.

[1] Pulpería: a small country grocery store of the pampas.

Digitized by Google

SARDETI. That is the lovely melody. Bring on the mazamorra.[1]

GUITAR PLAYER. A gaucho of the Argentine,
A native of this pampas land,
Belgrano saw me, sword in hand,
Defend her from a foe unclean.
But since that time I've never seen
A happy day or happy hour.
A cruel fate has made me cower
In black despair and bitter grief:
A gaucho treated like a thief,
I languish in fate's awful power.

SARDETI. That is the kind of a song I like. Help yourself to the gin.

GUITAR PLAYER. I'll toast you without more ado. My throat is dry and my mouth is watering. [*He drinks.*

SARDETI. As you wish, singer . . . you are wonderful.

GUITAR PLAYER. Good! . . . Listen: [*Sings*]
I roam the pampas on my steed,
And seek for hospitality.
And where I go my hand you see
Held out for food to meet my need.
At festivals I oft proceed
To sing of love and love's sweet story.
And so, my friends, I sit before ye
And crave forgiveness for my lay.
No singer, I, but let me say
If you don't like it . . . well, I'm sorry!

SARDETI. You have sung like the nightingale, my friend; winning many flowers like a good creole.

GUITAR PLAYER. Many thanks, comrade. I'm much obliged for your flowers, and I return the compliment.

Enter suddenly JULIAN ANDRADE *and* JUAN MOREIRA

[1] Mazamorra: a sort of porridge.

159521

Digitized by Google

ANDRADE. *Canejo!* Your wail has given me a great deal of pleasure. I congratulate you, my friend, with all my heart.

MOREIRA. Comrade, I also congratulate you as an honest creole. Bring on the drinks; I'm dying for one. Give us one, pulpero. [SARDETI *serves them, trembling with fear.*

GUITAR PLAYER. As a cursed outcast, I thank you for your words. I offer you a stout and devoted heart.

[*They all drink.*

MOREIRA. [*Drawing his knife*] And now, excuse me, gentlemen, if I disturb this gathering. This man [*indicating* SARDETI] owes me a debt. Defend yourself, thief, and don't stand there cowering with fear! I'm going to cut out your entrails for a thief and a swindler.

ANDRADE. Say no more to him, comrade; I'll watch him from behind. Finish this pulpero so he can't do any more meddling.

SARDETI. [*Preparing to fight*] We'll do our possible. No one is born a fighter. But it is just possible, *amico* Moreira, that the cow may turn out to be the bull.

[*They fight while the onlookers watch them anxiously.*

MOREIRA. It's no use jumping about like that, my doddering old fool. Stop this one, Sardeti, it's going straight for your skin.

SARDETI. Cover yourself . . . recommend your soul to the Holy Mother, Moreira. [*Stabs him*]

MOREIRA. *Ahijuna!* You've stabbed me, you really have! Now I swear I'll cut out your entrails! [*Stabs him and* SARDETI *falls.*

SARDETI. Farewell . . . you have killed me! I have no hope!

ANDRADE. Have you collected your debt, Moreira, my friend?

MOREIRA. I have reaped my revenge!

Rapid Curtain

Digitized by Google

Scene Five

Same as Act One. Tata Viejo *and* Juancito *are drinking maté. It is night.*

Juancito. Where is Mamita, Tata? Why doesn't she come and take maté with us?

Tata Viejo. I can't tell you exactly where she is, my son, for she went out without letting me know.

Juancito. I asked you so I could call her in case that man who struck you the other day should come again.

Tata Viejo. Poor little puppy! If you saw me in danger, would you defend me?

Juancito. Indeed I would! That's what that little knife Papito gave me is for. [*Weeps*] Poor Papito! I wonder where he is tonight.

Tata Viejo. Hush, my boy . . . you tear my heart.

Juancito. My poor papito! [*Pause*] But why doesn't Mamita come?

Tata Viejo. Ah, puppy! While your father is probably fighting some one, or exposing his body to bullets, your mother is whispering in some old hag's ear about some medicines.

Juancito. Mamita used to cry a lot when Papito was away. . . . But now she doesn't seem to be so sorry.

Tata Viejo. That's because one forgets as time goes on. Ah! Don Francisco, Don Francisco! It is his fault that your father had to flee for his life, like a dove without a nest, and suffering a thousand wants.

Enter Juan Moreira. *He is in a towering rage*

Moreira. Vengeance has escaped me! The miserable scoundrels! Tata! Puppy! [*They embrace.*

Tata Viejo. My son!

Digitized by Google

JUANCITO. Papito!

TATA VIEJO. There is blood on your hands! What have you done, Juan?

MOREIRA. Killed a swindler, lawfully, as one should kill a man . . . hand to hand and face to face.

TATA VIEJO. You killed—?

MOREIRA. Sardeti, the pulpero. But I have yet another to kill to make my vengeance complete.

TATA VIEJO. What are you saying? Still more killing?

MOREIRA. Don Francisco, the Alcalde of Lobos . . . for not treating me with justice. But where is Vicenta?

Enter VICENTA *in great agitation. In a panic of guilt she throws herself upon her knees*

VICENTA. Forgive me, my dear Juan! I thought you were dead!

MOREIRA. [*Starting back*] So! You have deceived me, *canalla?*

VICENTA. [*Pleadingly*] No, my Juan!

MOREIRA. [*Menacingly*] How about the man who just left you?

VICENTA. My God! [*Swoons*]

MOREIRA. Remorse will be good for you. Farewell, Tata Viejo! Farewell, dear little puppy mine! The police are on my trail and will be here before long.

TATA VIEJO. My son!
JUANCITO. Papito! } *Embracing* JUAN

MOREIRA. [*Putting them away from him*] No! I must go and fight the police until I conquer or die. Farewell, dear family. [*Throws them a kiss and departs*]

TATA VIEJO. Puppy . . . come to my arms! [JUANCITO *embraces him*] Let us weep for your father, shamefully dishonored by her, your mother.

Enter a SERGEANT *and four* CONSTABLES

SERGEANT. Juan Moreira!

Digitized by Google

TATA VIEJO. [*Stepping back*] Eh?

SERGEANT. [*Looking around*] He must be hiding here. If he doesn't come out of his own free will, we'll have to drag him out.

TATA VIEJO. Please!

SERGEANT. It's no use. Tie this old man up and see to it that you leave marks on his skin.

The CONSTABLES *seize* TATA VIEJO.

JUANCITO. [*Throws himself on the prostrate body of his mother*] Mamita!

TATA VIEJO. Savages! Scoundrels! Don't treat me like this. Draw your swords and let me die fighting!

[*The* SERGEANT *raises his sword.* TATA VIEJO *frees himself and grapples with him a moment and then falls.*

Rapid Curtain

LAST SCENE

A courtyard. On the right, the entrances to two houses. On the left, up stage, a well. Along the background stretches a very low wall of adobe above which one catches a glimpse of an immense plain. Enter the SERGEANT *and four* CONSTABLES.

SERGEANT. Keep a sharp lookout, boys, and don't slip! Moreira must have fallen into the river; he'll never show up around these parts any more.

CONSTABLE. Sergeant!

SERGEANT. What is it, Chirino?

CONSTABLE. That door is open. Moreira might be in there.

Digitized by Google

SERGEANT. In that case, to arms!

[They enter the open doorway and drag forth ANDRADE, *bound hand and foot.*

CONSTABLE. We've done well!

SERGEANT. Not so much! This is Julian Andrade, another wild gaucho and a very good friend of Juan Moreira's. He's probably in this other house. Take this fellow away.

[The CONSTABLES *remove* ANDRADE *and then return.*

CONSTABLE. Shall I knock, Sergeant?

SERGEANT. Knock, and then be ready for the attack. *[The* CONSTABLE *knocks.* MOREIRA *from within asks who it is]* Open in the name of the law, friend Moreira!

MOREIRA. *[From within]* Damn these creoles! If you come to arrest me, you won't have to die of longing.

He dashes suddenly out, fires a few shots, and goes back again.

SERGEANT. You'd better surrender, friend Moreira. It's no use hiding in there.

MOREIRA. *[Re-enters, carrying* VICENTA *in his arms. He throws her at the* SERGEANT'S *feet]* Here's something to amuse yourselves with! *[Another shot, and he rushes back into the house]*

VICENTA. *[On her knees to the* CONSTABLES] Forgive me . . . please . . . I am a miserable woman!

CONSTABLE. *[Warning her away]* Be off quickly, Señora; they may burn you if you don't. [VICENTA *runs off.*

SERGEANT. Again I tell you to stop fighting and surrender, my friend. [MOREIRA *returns and fires again.*

MOREIRA. Take that, you thieves! *[They all discharge their weapons. The* CONSTABLES, *trembling with fear, take refuge behind the well]* The storm is over, the clouds have rolled away. Now's the time to cheat the cheaters. May God show me the way. . . . Look! Here is a wall with which I can save myself—my only hope. *[Starts toward the wall as if to jump over it]* As soon as I am free of the constables I'll make for the open

Digitized by Google

country. [*A* CONSTABLE, *rising suddenly behind him, stabs him in the back*] Ah-h! Farewell, sweet hope. They've killed me! [*Without turning, he fires a shot that wounds his murderer in the eye and hand*] Ah! . . . Coward! . . . Traitor! . . . It is unjust! Juan Moreira is conquered . . . conquered . . . but by treachery! [*He and the* CONSTABLE *both sink lifeless to the ground*]

Rapid Curtain

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

SANTOS VEGA

A POETIC EVOCATION OF THE LEGEND OF THE FAMOUS MINSTREL OF THE PAMPAS, IN THREE ACTS, FOUR SCENES, AND A PROLOGUE

By LUIS BAYON HERRERA

Digitized by Google

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE PROLOGUE
ARGENTINA, *the daughter of one of* DON PAULO'S *tenants*
VICENTA, *the ranch cook*
ROSA, *servant at "The Light"*
ELVIRA, DON PAULO'S *wife*
RUFINA, *cook at "The Light"*
SANTOS VEGA
GUMERSINDO, *an old gaucho*
CONTRERAS, *a payador*
JACINTO, RUPERTO, CIRILO } *gauchos*
JUAN SIN ROPA
DON PAULO, *the patron*
A SERGEANT OF THE POLICE
FIRST SOLDIER
SECOND SOLDIER
THE PATRON OF "THE LIGHT"
FIRST PEON
SECOND PEON
A PULPERO
FIRST GUITAR PLAYER
RANCHMEN, GIRLS, GUITAR PLAYERS

The action takes place in the Argentine during the early part of the last century.

Digitized by Google

THE PROLOGUE

[Spoken before the curtain]

Is Santos Vega a myth? Did he ever live? Was there ever really a minstrel by that name who roamed the pampas on the spirited steed that he himself had trained with all the skill of a gaucho? Was he really the first of the gaucho singers? Was this minstrel a member of that race of horse-tamers who succumbed to the march of Progress with a song on their lips? Or was he purely a creature of the imagination of an idealistic race who knew how to dream? What matters it as long as the poet dwelt in the hearts of that proud race who created him for the purpose of adoring him so devotedly afterward? Perhaps the wind never knew his song; perhaps no maiden ever gave him her love: but of him dreamed every heart of that race, noble, virile, bizarre. . . . Traces of the singer still remain on the pampas: at night his glorious guitar still weeps in a melancholy, reminiscent wail. He was a poet who came out of the solitudes to join his grief to that of his brothers. He was the precursor of the indomitable countrymen of Belgrano, Guemes, and La Libertad. He was the poetry of the wide pampas land, the soul of a gigantic race that is dead. Poetic souls still tell how they have seen the sorrowful shadow of his proud figure wandering through the desert lands. Singer and lover, gallant and swaggerer, a song on his lips, his sorrel between his knees, his guitar on his back, and his dirk at his belt, he was as bold and rebellious as a new Satan. He of the great fame, our beloved singer, is not dead: he lives in our hearts, a sorrowful and proud emblem of the

Digitized by Google

past, a lyric flower of our glorious tradition. A romantic and courageous figure, beset with a great sorrow, this singer is to pass through this fervent evocation which, in memory of the soul of our beloved minstrel, a wandering and poor maker of rhymes has sung weeping with all his heart and soul.

[*When the prologue is finished the song of the second act is heard played upon a guitar and the curtain immediately rises.*

Digitized by Google

ACT ONE

A small ranch. Down stage on the right, the ranch house. As the curtain rises, the following are discovered: VICENTA, GUMERSINDO, CONTRERAS, CIRILO, *and* RUPERTO.

VICENTA. The sun hadn't come up yet when I went out. I saw him go by long before the day's work had begun. He was riding the best horse I ever set eyes on—a sorrel that was as swift as the wind. You needn't think I'm lying, or that I imagined it, either. He was going so fast you'd think he was running a race with the wind! He must have been a singer because he carried a guitar with pretty decorations on it.

GUMERSINDO. He was probably a payador on his way home.

JACINTO. [*Coming out of the house in a bad humor, and crossing to* VICENTA] When are we going to have maté?

VICENTA. Is the lad in such a hurry for his maté? I'm just about to make it.

JACINTO. Go tend to your stove, then!

VICENTA. How gentle he is this morning!

JACINTO. I'm no priest that I must pray!

VICENTA. Wait till I feel like it, then.

JACINTO. You'll feel like something else in a minute!

GUMERSINDO. Come, you two have fought long enough.

JACINTO. Hurry up with that maté!

VICENTA. He isn't even the patron . . . and listen to the way he orders me around! What if he got to be the Major!

JACINTO. I'd have you pegged out on the ground . . . only I'm a gaucho and can't.

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. [*As she goes off up stage*] Ugh! I'm going because he frightens me, and because he would cut me to pieces if I didn't!

RUPERTO. Don't you suppose Vicenta dreamed all that about the horseman?

CIRILO. According to her she never saw a faster horse.

RUPERTO. She's never seen my race-horse, then.

JACINTO. Of course not!

RUPERTO. There isn't another like it, I tell you! You won't find a better or a prettier piebald in the world.

CONTRERAS. He's the finest animal on the pampas.

RUPERTO. You're right there. Why, he's the king of the braves! Even the cleverest and best gauchos can't beat me in a race.

CONTRERAS. Is that so!

CIRILO. How queer!

RUPERTO. For a whole year now not a single person would run his horse alongside of my piebald . . . that's a fact . . . not a single soul!

CIRILO. Well, well!

JACINTO. They are afraid to lose. Have you got the bottle?

RUPERTO. Of course I have!

JACINTO. Then hand it over before I take it from you.

RUPERTO. With great pleasure, my friend; but be careful, for whenever you bend your elbow your arm goes to sleep.

JACINTO. Is that so?

RUPERTO. May I drop dead if it isn't!

JACINTO. Then I won't drink.

RUPERTO. Don't be a fool—take it. But be careful . . . stay awake!

JACINTO. Good advice!

RUPERTO. I don't say it to be funny, but my throat is dry after talking so much about my horse.

Digitized by Google

JACINTO. [*After drinking discreetly*] What do you say to that?

RUPERTO. It's gone!

JACINTO. Got some tobacco?

RUPERTO. Yes, I've got that, too. Take the plug.

JACINTO. And the tools?

RUPERTO. I'll give them to you.

GUMERSINDO. Generous to the death!

CONTRERAS. The way he was going on I thought he was going to ask for some saliva—

JACINTO. Don't be nasty . . .

CONTRERAS. To spit with!

RUPERTO. He can have that, too, if he wants it.

JACINTO. [*Angrily*] Your—

RUPERTO. [*Interrupting him angrily*] And yours, too, you thief! Give me back that tobacco and never speak to me again!

JACINTO. All right! Don't get angry. Take your plug, brave boy. I'll give you back your brandy, too, if you want me to throw it—

RUPERTO. You'd better get out, and right now—or the dunghill . . .

JACINTO. [*Drawing his knife*] Right! A plague take your dung! Pull out your knife and be quick about it. No thief can shout at me for nothing!

CONTRERAS. Pst! The patron!

[*They all compose themselves.*

DON PAULO. [*Appearing in the doorway of the house*] Jacinto, go saddle my fastest horse.

JACINTO. [*Aside, to* RUPERTO, You're lucky, my friend! I was just about to cut you to pieces.

DON PAULO. What did you say?

JACINTO. Nothing.

DON PAULO. First go to the near-by village and give this letter to my brother. Then, without a moment's delay, hurry

Digitized by Google

to the Major's house and tell him to call out his soldiers at once.

GUMERSINDO. Are we going to have an Indian uprising?

DON PAULO. Would it surprise you? [*To* JACINTO] Harry and saddle up.

JACINTO. [*As he goes out*] With all speed, Patron.

[*Exit* DON PAULO.

CIRILO. Don Paulo seems gloomy these last few days.

GUMERSINDO. He isn't a very happy man. You see, you're a new-comer in these parts and you don't know the reason for it. Don Paulo lost his daughter in the last uprising.

CIRILO. Was she killed?

CONTRERAS. She is still alive.

CIRILO. But—

GUMERSINDO. Wait till I tell you. An Indian chief carried her off, and now she's a captive on the pampas. Now you can understand why he is so desperate with grief and goes about looking so sad.

CIRILO. Poor Don Paulo! How awful!

RUPERTO. Don Paulo is as strong and hard as rock. But you ought to see the mother! She runs around yelling like mad for death.

CONTRERAS. And every now and then she'll rush out and yell at us, "Can't you see that the Indians are coming?"

GUMERSINDO. That's a natural result of her madness. Just visions. She has been seeing Indian attacks ever since that awful day.

CIRILO. What was it like?

CONTRERAS. Who saw it?

RUPERTO. They say they were nearly all lost.

GUMERSINDO. [*Showing a wound on his right arm*] I wasn't. This wound will swear to that! It's a remembrance of a stab with a pike that I got in the fight. Listen and I'll

Digitized by Google

tell you about the attack the Indians made on us that night.

CIRILO. Out with it!

[*They gather around the old gaucho and listen with interest to the following story, which he tells with great emotion.*

GUMERSINDO. There have been few Indian fights as fierce as that one. It is the saddest memory I have in my life. So don't be surprised, my friends, if I cry a little when I talk about it. To make matters worse, the moon made everything as bright as day. If it hadn't been a beautiful clear night I never could have seen that Indian carry off the prettiest flower in the country. On other nights as beautiful as that you might have heard our songs and the sweet, sad strumming of our poor guitars in the calm silence of the pampas. Since that night, however, our guitars have not sounded the same and our verses are not like those we used to make. All the good in us was carried off on the spears of the savages. That night, when we were all eating supper after a hard day's work, the dogs all suddenly began to growl at once. I was the first to notice it. It was like an evil omen warning us that something was disturbing the quiet slumber of the pampas. I rushed to the door of our quarters. The country was bathed in silver; and up there beneath the stars was the large white moon. In the distance I could see very clearly why the dogs were growling. It was the Indians! Full tilt they came—like a sudden cloud on a stormy night driven by a hundred winds—on horses as fast as the wind, if not faster. I could hardly see them, they were so far away, and there was so much dust from the horses' hoofs, but I could already hear their shrieks. It was horrible, friends, to see them coming, faster than it takes to tell. They came like shots out of a gun! Next I could see their spears sticking out above the dust cloud. I began to hear even the tinkling

Digitized by Google

of the little bells fastened to the horses' foreheads. They charged in a half-moon as usual, led by an Indian as big as a bull. I judged by his looks that he was the chief, or the devil—for his face, which I could see as he came nearer, was horrible to look on. I barely had time to raise the alarm. Everything happened like lightning. When they heard me shout, the ranchmen jumped on their horses and went out like a lot of brave fellows to open a breach in that wall of lances—and there must have been five hundred of them! I confess my legs trembled as I jumped on my horse. I didn't see much of what went on. I fought with my knife, and came near losing my life many times. At last I opened up a breach! Just then I heard a scream that was like a stab in the heart, for I knew whose it was. Our little patroncita was being dragged off by her precious hair between two ferocious Indians! Friends! If all the lances the savages carried that night had been stuck into my body at one time I wouldn't have suffered as much as I did when I saw that little girl dragged off like a rag and half covered with blood. I could do no more after that. I was blinded by grief. Though the danger was great, I hardly knew what was going on. Suddenly a big Indian, the same who was leading the others when they made the attack, ordered them to drop the poor child. Then he stood for a moment looking at her. He must have been thinking how pretty she was, for, just as she was—half dead from pain and fright—he threw her across his horse's back and rode off like a streak of lightning. He knew he was carrying off a prize! Bah! She was the soul of the ranch, the flower of this house that is so sad now that she has gone! She is worse than dead now. She is in the desert, on the pampas. Our poor patroncita! She was so pretty, so happy here where every one petted her . . . and that is why her mother is raving mad, and why Don Paulo is so gloomy. And that is why our poor guitars, now that she is

Digitized by Google

not here to listen to them, do not sound as they used to. Everything went with her. Without her, everything seems empty.

CIRILO. Don't tell me any more, my friend. I'm too strong to cry, but you bring tears to my eyes.

GUMERSINDO. That's right: weep with me. Tears are good for you. They bring peace. When there is sorrow in your heart, they comfort it. Our sorrows leave us with our tears, and flowers grow where there were only thorns. If any one boasts to me that he has never wept, I tell him that brave men weep more than cowards: for a dirk is as useless against a heart torn with grief as it is against a storm.

CIRILO. *Canejo!* But you say beautiful things!

GUMERSINDO. And everything I say is true. For even the devil isn't wise just because he *is* the devil, but because he is so old!

[*At this moment there comes a scream of terror from the interior of the ranch house that alarms the ranchmen.*

CIRILO. What was that scream?

RUPERTO. Here she comes, half crazy!

ELVIRA. [*Off stage, screaming with terror*] Quick—here come the Indians!

CONTRERAS. She's got her knife in her hand!

GUMERSINDO. You men had better hold her. She'll hurt somebody if you don't.

CONTRERAS. The first one who can had better disarm her.

[ELVIRA *runs from the house, knife in hand. Her face is haggard and her eyes are staring.*

GUMERSINDO. [*As she appears*] Now! [*They hold her.*

ELVIRA. [*Struggling to release herself*] Let me go!

CIRILO. [*Attempting to disarm her*] One minute!

DON PAULO. [*Entering in alarm*] Take her knife away, quick!

Digitized by Google

ELVIRA. [*Terrified*] But aren't the Indians coming?

CIRILO. [*Avoiding a thrust which* ELVIRA *has made at him and disarming her*] I nearly got it that time!

GUMERSINDO. Don't be frightened, Patroncita.

CONTRERAS. The Indians aren't really coming.

ELVIRA. [*Sobbing*] I want to go into the desert and make them give up my daughter.

DON PAULO. Will you take her in, please?

ELVIRA. [*Resisting*] No, no! Let me go!

GUMERSINDO. Come, Patroncita!

DON PAULO. [*Pleading with her*] Elvira!

ELVIRA. Give me my knife. I want to go after her.

[*Two of the ranchmen succeed in getting her into the house. After a short pause they return to the stage, deeply moved.*

GUMERSINDO. She'll die of sorrow.

[*And as if to interpret the anguish of the moment, the voice of* SANTOS VEGA *is heard in the distance, singing the following:*

SANTOS. Ah! Fire and sorrow are the same!
They both most cruelly torment,
And never cease their evil bent
While there is aught to feed the flame.

[*Their curiosity is aroused on hearing his voice.*

GUMERSINDO. [*Thoughtfully*] What a beautiful voice!

VICENTA. [*Entering joyously*] There's my horseman! He's just arrived. What a horse, what a guitar, and what a singer!

SANTOS. [*His voice sounds nearer. A plaintive melody*]
An errant singer I, one who
Through wandering seeks relief in vain
From memory of love's sweet pain
That ever does his life pursue.
So if I sing of grief to you,

Digitized by Google

Be not surprised; and as I sing,
If tears to these dim eyes I bring,
They're drops of blood that my poor heart
Has wept. Such is my singer's art,
That drops from bleeding hearts I wring.

RUPERTO. That song is a prize!

GUMERSINDO. I've heard a good many singers, but he's the best of them all!

CONTRERAS. You are pretty quick to judge, old man. It's easy enough to sing like that and not make a mistake. But it's a different matter altogether when you are sitting face to face with a rival in a contest.

GUMERSINDO. I know it is. Don't be offended.

VICENTA. [*Disdainfully*] He's trying to make comparisons.

CONTRERAS. Nobody has ever been able to beat me when I started out to sing. Remember that, old busybody, and stop tormenting me.

VICENTA. You are the one who does the tormenting—when you play that old guitar of yours.

SANTOS. [*Still off stage, and singing to the same melody*]

My lips are but a gaping wound;
My songs its ebbing flow of blood;
My verses are the passionate flood
Of sorrows in my soul profound.
My songs are moans; they do not sound
As do a happier singer's lays.
'Tis so because my heart betrays
The heavy burden of its grief.
And so to find a sweet relief
I sing these songs through endless days.

GUMERSINDO. Who is that payador?

ARGENTINA. [*Who has entered a moment before*] Have I not heard that voice before?

CIRILO. Nobody ever sang like that!

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. And *he* never sang better.

ARGENTINA. [*Emotionally*] I dreamed of love last night. I dreamed that there was once a singer who was dying for want of some one to love; and that instead of weeping from the pain of his torment, he sang of his despair in verses so full of feeling that they brought tears to my eyes. And then I dreamed that I crept to his side and wept, and that he kissed my hair and dried my tears and grew to love me. And from that time on, according to my dream, he no longer sang of his grief, because it had left him, but of his newly discovered joy.

RUPERTO. Here he comes!

VICENTA. And with all the peons on the place trooping after him like a drove of cattle!

SANTOS. [*Sings: his voice very near*]

The pampa is my native land,
In all its great immensity.
My greatest wish shall ever be
To force my heart to my command,
That I may dwell in peace. I stand
For Liberty; my law's my knife;
My life is naught but pain and strife;
My soul is but a wounded dove
From so much suffering—and love.
To sing, then, is my lot in life.

[*As he sings the last two lines, the famous singer of the pampas enters, mounted on a spirited sorrel, his guitar slung across his back, his dirk in its sheath, and a charming smile upon his lips. Various ranchmen and peons follow him, applauding in admiration. He seems to produce happiness all about him.*

GUMERSINDO. God give good health to the payador!

SANTOS. Good health to you all!

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. Tell us what good wind brought us such a wonderful singer? I am old, but I never heard a better one.

GUMERSINDO. Be sure to let us know if you need anything. We never refuse a favor to any one in this place—much less to a singer.

SANTOS. My good old friend! I like that, and I thank you all. But as I deserve nothing, you may save your hospitality for a more needy occasion. I swear I shall never in my life forget the reception you have given me at this ranch. And now, to answer your first question, let me say that in this adventurous life of mine, the thing I like best of all is not to know where I am going or whether I'll get there. I don't know where I was bound for this time, but here I am, and purely by chance. I am like the birds that fly. I tell my troubles in sad songs to the winds because it strengthens me to sing them and comforts me to hear them. [*He sings.*

An errant singer I, one who
  Through wandering seeks relief in vain
  From memory of love's sweet pain,
That ever does his life pursue.
So if I sing of grief to you,
Be not surprised; and as I sing,
If tears to these dim eyes I bring,
  They're drops of blood that my poor heart
  Has wept. Such is my singer's art,
That drops from bleeding hearts I wring.

My lips are but a gaping wound;
  My songs its ebbing flow of blood;
  My verses are the passionate flood
Of sorrows in my soul profound.
My songs are moans, they do not sound

Digitized by Google

As do a happier singer's lays.
'Tis so because my heart betrays
The heavy burden of its grief.
And so to find a sweet relief
I sing these songs through endless days.

My only joy and truest friend
I find in my well-tuned guitar.
Within its silver strings there are
Sweet melodies that melt and blend
And stay with me until the end.
Without its solace I should die.
I taught it first to sing, yes, I,
And then to weep and suffer pain;
And when I pass away I fain
Would have it with me where I lie.

My knife's as strong as steel can be,
And so it never knows defeat.
To strike it is both sure and fleet.
It never wounds unlawfully,
And never kills in treachery.
It holds my liberty and fate,
And keeps them both inviolate.
Whene'er it strikes 'tis always just,
But when it kills, it kills with lust:
Though loyally and without hate.

As much my own, my sorrel steed,
As I the pampas' heart and soul.
There never was a shapelier foal,
Nor animal of swifter breed.
And where he wills I let him speed.

Digitized by Google

His way is my way; where he goes
Go I: our wills are never foes.
I drop the reins upon his neck,
And never think to curb or check;
I let him choose because—he knows!

The pampa is my native land,
In all its great immensity.
My greatest wish shall ever be
To force my heart to my command,
That I may dwell in peace. I stand
For Liberty, my law's my knife;
My life is naught but pain and strife;
My soul is but a wounded dove
From so much suffering—and love.
To sing, then, is my lot in life.

Though bitter sorrow is my lot,
'Twill never, never be my death.
So long as I can draw my breath
I'll sing, and when I sing there's naught
Can kill me: grief most sure cannot.
A payador, I now proclaim
That herein am I known to fame;
And when I sing from my great heart
The bravest fall before my art:
For Santos Vega is my name!

[*When* SANTOS VEGA *finishes his "presentation" the ranchmen crowd around him to offer their congratulations.* ARGENTINA, *who has exchanged several interested glances with the singer, is absorbed in thought.*

GUMERSINDO. Santos Vega, of course!

VICENTA. The most celebrated payador in the country!

CIRILO. What luck to have him here!

Digitized by Google

RUPERTO. [*To* CONTRERAS] Here's your chance to sit face to face with a rival.

VICENTA. There's no comparison.

FIRST PEON. That fellow is in a different class.

SECOND PEON. There's nobody like him.

VICENTA. The horse he's on shows he's no mean rider.

FIRST PEON. All you have to do is to look at him.

SECOND PEON. You couldn't match him.

VICENTA. Even his lasso is much too long for you men to handle.

CONTRERAS. I'll have a chance, and I'm going after it now. So far, I have never given in a hair's-breadth to any one in singing. I'm no mean rider, either; I'd rather ride a wild horse than a tame one any day!

RUPERTO. Bah! . . .

CONTRERAS. [*Approaching* SANTOS VEGA] Have I your permission?

SANTOS. What? Certainly!

CONTRERAS. I, too, am a singer.

SANTOS. Splendid! What can I do for you? Don't say another word, my friend; I always like—

CONTRERAS. First I want to tell you that I am used to singing with the best singers in the country, and that I am thought to be very good at it. I'd like to see if I belong to that class of fakers that you always leave so far behind—that is, if you accept? . . .

SANTOS. Certainly! Whatever and wherever you wish . . . I'd be very glad to.

CONTRERAS. If I win—

SANTOS. Don't even think of that!

CONTRERAS. Remember, I'm one of the best and don't know what it is to lose. We'll see which one of us is the better!

SANTOS. Everybody will see that you are not!

Digitized by Google

CONTRERAS. Tomorrow—Sunday evening, then. Does that suit you?

SANTOS. Where shall it be?

CONTRERAS. The near-by pulpería would be a good place, I think.

SANTOS. Splendid! That's all there is to it.

CONTRERAS. [*Holding out his hand*] Tomorrow evening.

SANTOS. [*Taking the proffered hand*] Tomorrow! I sha'n't forget!

CONTRERAS. [*As he goes out*] Good! Boys, you all heard. Be sure and come! [*Exit.*

GUMERSINDO. And now let's go, in case the singer wants to rest. We mustn't forget the work we have to finish today.

[*The ranchmen go out, leaving* VICENTA, SANTOS VEGA, *and* ARGENTINA *on the stage.*

VICENTA. That's enough: Santos can stay with us. [*In low tones, approaching* SANTOS VEGA *and indicating* ARGENTINA] I'll make tracks in a minute. I don't want to be in your way.

SANTOS. [*Pleased*] Very good!

ARGENTINA. [*As* VICENTA *starts to go*] Are you going, Vicenta?

VICENTA. [*With mock seriousness*] I'll stay if you want me to.

ARGENTINA. Please stay.

VICENTA. [*Crossing to* ARGENTINA] Are you afraid of him? Didn't you understand? I thought you would like to have me go. Didn't you notice him?

ARGENTINA. [*With emotion, and bursting into tears*] I? I have loved him without knowing that he even existed!

VICENTA. And that is why you are crying?

SANTOS. [*To* VICENTA] Tell me—what about your promise?

VICENTA. [*Roguishly*] What a hurry you are in! [*To* ARGENTINA] Can't you see I'm angry? [*Exit.*

[*As soon as* VICENTA *goes out,* SANTOS VEGA *approaches* ARGENTINA.

Digitized by Google

SANTOS. [*Tenderly*] Is the little dove mourning some forgotten love? I see sorrow peeping through the tears in your eyes. Is your trouble so great? Could not the words of a singer comfort you—a singer who has suffered, and who still suffers so much that were he to weep he would drown in his own tears?

ARGENTINA. [*Weakly*] And how can a singer who can only weep comfort me in my sorrow?

SANTOS. Because my own grief teaches me the cure. Wasn't it caused by love?

ARGENTINA. I have never known love.

SANTOS. Only love can make a woman weep. The wounded dove should not disdain my solace, nor think that because she has fallen she will fly no more. For I would give my life to help her in her flight. Is she pursued by a hawk which she fears will do her harm? I offer her my knife and my horse to defend her and my heart to soothe her pain: a song, too, very tender and consoling, for all that she has suffered.

ARGENTINA. Why do you offer me so much?

SANTOS. Because a woman deserves everything when she weeps.

ARGENTINA. And if some day, thanks to the song you offer me, my sadness turns to joy? Will I not then be a source of great anxiety to you?

SANTOS. The dove would fly off and forget me.

ARGENTINA. [*Impulsively, unable to contain herself*] No; for without your sympathy I should die . . . no matter where I went!

SANTOS. [*Comprehending*] Dear, dear little dove! How is it that I never found you until today, and then in pain? I bless the fall that left you in my path, dear little dove!

ARGENTINA. Singer, if you have suffered so much, why is it that your heart did not guess my sorrow before I spoke?

Digitized by Google

Why did you not know the cause of my tears before? I adored you before I even knew you existed, gaucho mine. Every night I dreamed that you would come soon. The days were long, but my faith was so strong that I never once doubted that you would come at last. You are the singing gaucho whom I loved before I met; the gaucho of my troubled dreams; of whom I was jealous before I knew he existed; for whom I would kill myself were he ever to forget me; the man to whom I desire to give all my life and all my love; my only and greatest joy and pain.

SANTOS. Even as you speak my heart is building you a nest. The moment you opened your lips I was stirred by a great emotion.

ARGENTINA. It is comforting to hear you, but I am afraid that I am dreaming and that I shall soon wake up—weeping as usual.

SANTOS. Don't be sad again. It makes me very unhappy to see your beautiful eyes hidden behind a veil of tears. You have nothing to fear now, for here I am at your side, dear heart—somewhat downcast, perhaps, and sorry to have waited so long. [*A pause*] But tell me, my dear; I've been so upset that I forgot to ask you—what do they call you?

ARGENTINA. Argentina.

SANTOS. What a beautiful name for a song!

ARGENTINA. Take me with you!

SANTOS. How could I leave you? That would be like cutting our heart in two! Monday morning, just as the sun is rising, if the singing contest is over, I'll gallop off into the open country with my sweetheart behind me and with God as our only witness. Would you like that, beloved?

ARGENTINA. I'd be willing to go anywhere with you—even to the desert!

SANTOS. That's a brave dear! I like you for that! [*Pause*] May I kiss you?

Digitized by Google

ARGENTINA. [*Giving herself into his arms*] You are the master of my life!

[*They kiss. At this moment enter from up stage, on the left,* GUMERSINDO, RUPERTO, FIRST *and* SECOND PEONS, *and* CIRILO. *They gaze into the distance, shading their eyes with their hands.*

RUPERTO. It's the police, can't you see?

FIRST PEON. They're coming this way!

SECOND PEON. Who do you suppose they are after?

GUMERSINDO. Go and tell Cirilo, quick!

CIRILO. [*Sullcily*] Here I am, old man.

GUMERSINDO. [*Mysteriously*] Tell me—

CIRILO. They are after me.

GUMERSINDO. Are you going to give yourself up?

CIRILO. Yes. I've had enough of it.

GUMERSINDO. *Canejo!* So I thought!

CIRILO. I'm tired of dodging around.

SANTOS. What is there so good to look at?

RUPERTO. The police are coming.

SANTOS. [*Brusquely*] You don't tell me!

ARGENTINA. [*In alarm*] For you?

SANTOS. No, my life—I have nothing to fear. But I can never see the police without wanting to fight them.

ARGENTINA. Santos!

SANTOS. What are they coming here for?

CIRILO. They are looking for me.

SANTOS. You're not going to give yourself up?

CIRILO. Yes.

SANTOS. But aren't you going to defend yourself?

CIRILO. I'm not even going to make a move. I'm no stay-at-home gaucho; I know what it is to fight and to suffer; but I don't want to live like a whipped cur and spend my life running away from the police. And all because one day I came across a gathering of strangers who thought they owned

Digitized by Google

the earth because their judge protected them. The minute they saw me coming they tried to lasso me. But I'm not so easy to catch, and I didn't let them do it. Then they began to threaten me with the stocks. I left without even trying to kill anybody!

SECOND PEON. They're getting off their horses!

SANTOS. How many of them are there?

SECOND PEON. Four big fellows.

SANTOS. All the better!

ARGENTINA. Santos, Santos! . . . For my sake!

SANTOS. Don't be afraid, dear heart. Four policemen can't overpower me.

ARGENTINA. Santos, Santos! . . . Please!

Enter three SOLDIERS *and a* SERGEANT *on the run They start to seize* CIRILO

SERGEANT. At last you're caught, you bandit! I've got my hands on you now!

SANTOS. [*Breaking away from* ARGENTINA *and with one leap interposing himself between the* SOLDIERS *and* CIRILO] Hold your horses, my friends! It takes more than an "I wish" to capture a gaucho!

SERGEANT. [*In astonishment*] Who are you? [*To the* SOLDIERS, *as they attempt to lay hands on* SANTOS] Halt!

SANTOS. Anybody!

SERGEANT. Do you want to go before the judge? Nobody has ever even tried that.

SANTOS. That is just why some one must be the first.

SERGEANT. *Ahijuna!* You'll both go before the judge together!

SANTOS. It doesn't strike me that you are quite equal to that.

SERGEANT. I've had enough from you. [*Orders the* SOLDIERS *to attack him*] Take him! [*The* SOLDIERS *attempt to obey, and a fight ensues*]

Digitized by Google

SANTOS. You can't do anything with me. Here's where I act like a friend.

CIRILO. [*Deciding to fight*] I'm with you!

SANTOS. You'd better not get mixed up in this, comrade.

[*The combatants are arranged as follows: the* SERGEANT *and* THIRD SOLDIER *against* SANTOS VEGA, *and the* FIRST *and* SECOND SOLDIERS *against* CIRILO.

GUMERSINDO. It's foolhardy!

SERGEANT. [*Attempting to stab* SANTOS *with his saber*] Ah, my lying gaucho, take that!

SANTOS. [*Warding off the blow with his poncho*] You never even touched my hide. [*Stabbing the* SERGEANT *in the breast with his knife*] Guard yourself!

SERGEANT. [*As he falls*] He stabbed me!

SANTOS. One! (*To* THIRD SOLDIER] Now don't you give up after having boasted so much. He was a coward! [*Stabbing him*] Don't try to defend yourself from this!

[*The* THIRD SOLDIER *falls and* SANTOS *goes to* CIRILO'S *aid.*

CIRILO. I'm all right!

THIRD SOLDIER. [*As he falls*] I'm done for!

[*When the* FIRST SOLDIER *finds himself alone he starts to run away, with* CIRILO *after him.* SANTOS *detains* CIRILO.

SANTOS. Don't chase him. Leave him entirely to me, at least for this time. We'll tend to him later, so he can take the news of all this to the Justice! He has learned his lesson. You may be sure he won't forget!

ARGENTINA. Santos, my love!

FIRST SOLDIER. We'll meet again. There will be plenty of chances, don't forget that! If not today, perhaps tomorrow.

GUMERSINDO. That fellow is going to betray you.

SANTOS. He doesn't kill who merely wishes to—he must

Digitized by Google

know how first! Go, and bring another squad. But don't be so foolish as to bring such a handful with you next time. That would be like throwing your life away. Bring on the best of them—you can't play with me!

FIRST SOLDIER. Are you the devil?

SANTOS. No, Santos Vega!

ARGENTINA. [*Embracing him*] The singer of singers!

Rapid Curtain

Digitized by Google

ACT TWO

At the ranch known as "The Light." Open country. On the right, the entrance to the ranch house. Up stage on the right the door and windows of a pulpería can be seen. As the curtain rises, ROSA *comes from the pulpería with a small package and goes toward the ranch house. As she reaches the center of the stage she shades her eyes with her hand and looks off toward the left.*

ROSA. [*Calling*] Señora Rufina, come here! Vicenta is coming.

RUFINA. [*Entering hurriedly from the house*] Where is she?

VICENTA. [*Entering*] How are you, my dear?

RUFINA. [*Embracing her*] What good wind brought you here? What's the news? Tell me about yourself.

VICENTA. I just came over to have a little gossip and to say hello. I also thought that even if I am a bit late I might be able to help you a little. You must be terribly busy with all your preparations.

RUFINA. Don't say a word; I'm half crazy with work! How is your patroncita?

VICENTA. Bad!

ROSA. Is she really bewitched?

VICENTA. She hasn't known a thing since that awful night. Where is your patron?

RUFINA. He got up early to bring some special wine from the village and hasn't come back yet.

ROSA. And Argentina?

VICENTA. Heartbroken because she can't come to the

Digitized by Google

dance. She had to stay behind to keep the patrona company, and is in tears. And— Do you need anything?

RUFINA. What do you think we could need? Nothing!

VICENTA. Of course you're going to have carbonada?[1] How is it?

RUFINA. The best ever!

VICENTA. And mazamorra?

RUFINA. And meat pies and roasts.

VICENTA. You certainly haven't forgotten anything! Do you know who's coming?

RUFINA. Who?

VICENTA. Santos Vega!

RUFINA. Oh yes, I heard he was. I'm awfully glad!

ROSA. They say he's one of the very best payadors in the country.

VICENTA. *The* best! [*Laughter is heard in the pulpería*] Who's in there? [*Exit* ROSA *at left.*

RUFINA. Who do you suppose? The ranchmen.

VICENTA. Can the whole crowd get into the pulpería?

RUFINA. There are more in the sleeping-quarters.

VICENTA. The fiesta will be a great success if some fool doesn't come along and spoil it. Let's go into the kitchen; I want to give you a hand. Are we surely going to have fried corn?

RUFINA. Everything. Nothing will be wanting.

VICENTA. [*Counting on her fingers*] Mazamorra, carbonada, meat pies, roasts, good wine, dancing, and a song contest— there certainly is nothing missing! My friend has outdone herself.

As VICENTA *and* RUFINA *enter the house,* GUMERSINDO, RUPERTO, *and* JACINTO *come out of the pulpería.* GUMERSINDO *is drunk.*

GUMERSINDO. Bah! The pay'dors 're late.

[1] Carbonada: an Argentine dish not unlike pancakes.

Digitized by Google

RUPERTO. We'll have a little game while we wait for them.

GUMERSINDO. Fine gamblers you've been!

JACINTO. Come on, old man.

GUMERSINDO. I don't want to beat you! An' besides—if I ever get back in there, *canejo!*—I won't come out again. 'Cause I'm already half—

RUPERTO. That's true!

JACINTO. How quickly he got it!

GUMERSINDO. I p'tended to be asleep, but I was really half awake. If I play, you'll lose!

JACINTO. Fine! So much the better.

GUMERSINDO. There's nothing like wanting an ache to get one. [*Enter* CONTRERAS, *the payador, up stage, guitar in hand*] Well! You're late, but here you are at las'! I thought you had backed down.

CONTRERAS. Is Santos Vega in the pulpería?

JACINTO. No such luck! He hasn't even showed up yet.

CONTRERAS. What do you suppose has happened to the soldiers?

JACINTO. It was one of the patron's false alarms. He's always dreaming about an uprising. The soldiers were in the sleeping-quarters all night waiting for the Indians.

CONTRERAS. All the better if nothing happened.

JACINTO. That precaution of his was like a stab in the back to me. While I was off carrying out the patron's orders, another gaucho came along and took advantage of the fact that my girl was alone and stole her heart from me!

GUMERSINDO. Who you talking 'bout?

JACINTO. Argentina.

CONTRERAS. And who did this mean trick?

JACINTO. The celebrated Santos Vega!

RUPERTO. If that fellow has had his hands on her you've lost your stake, because his cows never turn out to be bulls, my friend.

Digitized by Google

GUMERSINDO. An' there's no place for a young calf where that bull bellows!

RUPERTO. Nobody can get ahead of him—he's a *real* gaucho. You're an ox alongside of him!

GUMERSINDO. An' where will the ox go that doesn't plow?

JACINTO. All right! We'll see who is brave. He'll have to meet me when he gets back, and we'll fight it out about her if he wants to.

RUPERTO. You'll be sure to lose.

GUMERSINDO. There's no knife can touch *his* skin.

JACINTO. The quickest gaucho stays on his feet.

Enter, up stage, CIRILO, FIRST *and* SECOND PEONS *and various ranchmen*

GUMERSINDO. Here come the boys!

JACINTO. And Santos Vega isn't with them!

CIRILO. He ought to be here right now.

JACINTO. I want him to come.

Enter the GUITAR PLAYERS *from up stage on the left*

CIRILO. Here come the guitar players—the life of the fiesta!

GUMERSINDO. Ah! We forget everything when all these guitars are around. There's nothing better than the playing of guitars to drown our sorrows.

CIRILO. And a few drinks of gin!

GUMERSINDO. Are you tuned up?

FIRST GUITAR PLAYER. All ready!

GUMERSINDO. Fine! Now we mus' tone up these fellows with a few little bottles of gin, so's they can blossom out later on the strings. Into the pulpería with the guitar players! [*They obey him*] In with the ranchmen, too, before the dance begins, so their legs won't get tired and they won't act like boobies! [*Exeunt all but* JACINTO *and* GUMERSINDO] Here, Useless! Don't you want to go in?

JACINTO. No, I'm waiting for Santos Vega.

GUMERSINDO. What for?

Digitized by Google

JACINTO. To speak to him.

GUMERSINDO. To shoot him!

JACINTO. Your grandmother!

GUMERSINDO. Like a chased ostrich! [*Starts toward the pulpería, but his inebriety makes it difficult for him*] Come with me, Jacinto.

JACINTO. [*Taking his arm*] I'll go, but I'll keep my eyes open.

[*As* JACINTO *and* GUMERSINDO *go out, the* FIRST SOLDIER *appears very cautiously from the left and approaches the window of the pulpería, through which he peeps for a moment. Suddenly he looks toward the left and disappears quickly to the right. Enter* SANTOS VEGA *from the left and* ROSA *from the house.*

SANTOS. Good afternoon.

ROSA. Good afternoon.

SANTOS. I was wondering if this were not "The Light," where they tell me there is to be a cattle-branding fiesta, but now I can tell by looking at it that this is the ranch I'm looking for.

ROSA. Yes, this is it.

SANTOS. I don't need to ask. All I have to do is to look at you, my dear. You have a light in your eyes and a fiesta in your smile. No matter where I had met you I would have dismounted at once, sure that the fiesta would be held wherever you wished the light of your eyes to shine. Eyes that are so black they hurt, and that glow like stars. In spite of their seeming hurt they do not make one sad; for all their stormy blackness, they gleam with a light that brightens, silences, and cheers.

ROSA. Nobody else ever saw so much beauty in my eyes.

SANTOS. That's because they are blinded by a glance. No one can look upon them without shutting his own as fast as ever they wish him to. The only reason why I can look upon

Digitized by Google

them without being blinded is because their light reminds me of the caressing and beloved eyes of my sweetheart, a sweet-voiced lark that dreams only of me, sings only for me, and now weeps for my absence.

ROSA. You've forgotten my eyes already!

SANTOS. They remind me of hers.

VICENTA. [*Within*] Rosa!

ROSA. Coming!

VICENTA. But, Rosa—but, girl— [*Entering*] Santos Vega! At last you've come! Rufina!

ROSA. I thought you must be Santos Vega, because nobody else could talk like that. Señora Rufina, come here!

RUFINA. [*Within*] Coming!

GUMERSINDO. [*Coming out of the pulpería*] *Ahijuna!* Well, if it isn't Santos Vega!

VICENTA. [*To* RUFINA *as she enters*] The best singer in the world!

GUMERSINDO. [*To the ranchmen as they come out of the pulpería*] The soul of our country!

ROSA. I've never heard you sing, but I'd like to.

VICENTA. Play your guitar and start the fiesta. Yours ought to be the first guitar to play.

GUMERSINDO. Snatch a song out of the wind—something you can put your soul into—that brave, sad soul that is the soul of this country.

SANTOS. [*Getting ready to sing*] Here go my song and my soul, for I never sing without that!

[*He sings a sad strain, accompanying himself upon his guitar.*

The branches of an ombú tree
Let fall their leaves like flowing tears:
A touch of wind, and then one hears
A plaintive wail in minor key.
And so I, in my misery,

Digitized by Google

Compose my sad and mournful songs,
And weep for my unrighted wrongs.
These songs of mine are like the leaves,
Like aching hearts the wind receives
And scatters through the land in throngs.

CIRILO. Fine!

VICENTA. He made me cry!

RUPERTO. Don't go on, I can't stand it.

GUMERSINDO. Unbosom your soul if you have so many sorrows to sing about.

SANTOS. [*Singing again*]

My sweetheart is a little dove
That came to make her downy nest
Within the shelter of my breast.
My songs are flowers that but prove
Sweet tokens of my lasting love.
Her cooing soothes my burning wound,
And in her ears forever sound
The mournful echoes of my plaint
Like tiny birds who, hurt and faint,
Seek refuge in her love profound.

GUMERSINDO. That's the way to sing, my friend, when you know how!

VICENTA. He certainly knows how to put everything he has into it!

GUMERSINDO. [*Crossing to the pulpería*] Ho there, pulpero! A little bottle of gin! Here, wet your throat—drain it at a gulp.

SANTOS. [*Drinks*] Thanks. Eh, Gumersindo?

GUMERSINDO. [*Taking the bottle from the singer's hands and holding it neck down*] That's the way a man should do! *Ahijuna!* What a fine kiss! You drained it in one gulp, brother!

JACINTO. [*Passing in front of and thrusting his face close to*

Digitized by Google

that of SANTOS, *he stares at him fixedly*] Do you know that I'm looking at you and that you don't seem to notice it?

SANTOS. [*Looking at him and putting down his guitar*] And I don't like the way you look!

JACINTO. Don't you? *Canejo!* The worse for you!

SANTOS. [*Drawing nearer*] What did you say?

JACINTO. [*Stepping back a pace and drawing his knife*] We'll fight if you want to.

SANTOS. Certainly! But what for?

JACINTO. You're confounded slow!

SANTOS. How?

JACINTO. If your little dove knew it she'd fly off to another nest where there isn't so much fear.

SANTOS. [*Drawing his knife*] I, fear! *Ahijuna!* Out of my way!

GUMERSINDO. [*Restraining* SANTOS] Hold your horses, partner! Don't kill him before you know why the fool is after you.

SANTOS. Why is he?

GUMERSINDO. Why, you see, he's jealous. He's suffering so that, though the lad is but a calf, he wants to be a bull just out of stupidity. [*To* JACINTO, *who advances upon him threateningly*] What's the matter? You want to fight me when I'm saving your hide?

SANTOS. Jealous of whom?

JACINTO. Of Argentina.

VICENTA. Why should you be jealous of her, pray?

SANTOS. Tell me.

JACINTO. Because I love her.

SANTOS. And does she love you?

JACINTO. Of course she does!

VICENTA. Listen to him! She never even looks at you, and you know it. You bother her to death. You follow

Digitized by Google

her around, and that's all. There's a great deal of difference between that and her liking to have you do it.

SANTOS. [*Sheathing his knife*] Put away your knife and your jealousy and keep your courage for another time. I might fight a thousand because I would rather lose my life than my liberty, without which, as without my songs, I should die. I carry a knife at my belt because one must be strong in order to be free. And I fight the police because they come to take men before a thief they call a judge who tries to make slaves of free men and tents of their hides. But I have never fought over love, and I never will, because I do not want caresses that are inspired by fear and not by love. I want to be loved for this [*touching his heart*], and never for this [*touching his knife*]. I want them to give me their hearts because they know there is a heart in my breast, and not because they suspect there is a knife at my belt. And that is the way Argentina, my life and my comfort, loves me: for the soul of me, and with a love that comes from the heart and not from fear.

JACINTO. But I want to tell you—

SANTOS. Wait! You shall have your say. Argentina is everything to me: peace, comfort, hope, joy—everything. She is all that I wish. She is my dove, my life, my heart's blood—even my verses. Very well—when we see Argentina again we'll ask her to whom she wishes to give her soul—which one of us is the choice of her heart. . . . And I swear to you that if she says you are her desire I'll gallop off into the open country, not knowing where I go, and leaving my heart behind—for it is all hers. And because she is my all, I shall go without my soul, without my songs, without peace, without joy—with nothing but my guitar to comfort me. . . . So alone that I shall pray for an early death. But if Argentina says that Santos Vega is her choice, that she lives only for me, and that my love is her master—

Digitized by Google

JACINTO. Poor Argentina!

SANTOS. What? Poor you, if you touch a hair of her head after that; for then I sha'n't hold myself back—I'll carve you as I would a steer! The lad is warned!

JACINTO. [*As he enters the pulpería*] We'll talk later.

SANTOS. I swear you sha'n't say much!

[*A moment of silence.*

VICENTA. [*Suddenly*] See here! Everybody is as silent as a graveyard at prayer-time!

GUMERSINDO. Just exactly! Here, let's have some joy again— Play up, guitar players! [*The* PATRON *of "The Light" appears*] *Ahijuna!* Here's the Patron!

PATRON. [*Greeting everybody*] Where did so many good things come from?

VICENTA. The dance can begin now.

Several young girls enter from left

ROSA. [*Pointing them out*] Señora Rufina!

RUFINA. [*As she sees them*] At last they've come!

VICENTA. Take a look at these girls—you were so sad a moment ago—it will cheer you up. They're very pretty. Bah, Santos Vega! Forget your troubles and take a look at these pretty flowers.

SANTOS. Yes, I was watching them. It is fitting that the sun should come out after such gloomy weather!

VICENTA. Gaucho, you always know just what to say!

ROSA. Let's begin the dance.

CONTRERAS. First we must have the contest. If you are willing, partner, tune up your guitar and let's see who can win.

SANTOS. With great pleasure.

[SANTOS *and* CONTRERAS, *seated face to face, tune their instruments.*

VICENTA. What a pair!

GUMERSINDO. [*Meaning* CONTRERAS] I see his finish!

RUPERTO. I think he ought to be given the advantage.

Digitized by Google

FIRST PEON. It's going to be a robbery—*canejo!*

GUMERSINDO. We'll see if Contreras is a good horseman this time.

VICENTA. I don't think such a heavy man can fool with a horse!

[*Some standing, others seated, they all gather around the singers.* SANTOS *begins with a prelude on his guitar which* CONTRERAS *immediately answers with another.*

CONTRERAS. [*Singing*]

Attention, friends, I first request,
And then your silence, if you please.
I wish to try with perfect ease
To prove that I am of the best.
That there are many worse I'll swear,
For I have never known defeat.
When one is best, I know 'tis meet
That others should be worse—that's clear!
And yet, 'tis not an easy task
To guess which one is going to win.
Be not too confident, I ask.
The proudest must some day give in;
The toughest rawhide rope will break;
The bravest rider of the plain
Will find his skill is oft in vain
So then it is not good to speak
And call this test a robbery.
But if in one great twisting leap
You think to throw me in a heap,
A gallant steed I swear you'll be!

SANTOS. [*After a preliminary flourish on his guitar*]

My rival speaks the truth to you:
It is no easy task to guess,
For fate's a horseman, I confess,
That only fiercest steeds subdue.

Digitized by Google

However, thanks are due to those
Who think that I can win today—
And yet I cannot really say
Until this test comes to a close,
If I deserve your confidence.
Till then, I pray most earnestly
That you restrain your compliments,
Lest I the winner fail to be.

CONTRERAS. Be not too humble, my good friend:
I know that you can sing right well;
And though I think that I excel,
If I should throw you, I foretell
That you will on your feet descend.

SANTOS. A payador of my renown
Is never humble in a crowd.
He may be prudent, yet be proud—
Too proud to ever yield his crown.
And now I'll give you some advice,
And pray, my friend, don't take offense:
'Tis better not to let me fence,
But question me, and be precise.

CONTRERAS. I could not take offense at this—
You did not say it to offend.
So I will ask you this, my friend:
What is the meaning of a kiss?

SANTOS. The earth and sun are wont to kiss
When night unto the day gives place;
And I can't help but think that this
Is like a lover's last embrace.
But when the ev'ning shadows fall,
Once more they do each other greet,
And kiss each other as they meet,
As at the morning's eager call.

Digitized by Google

We have a kiss's counterpart
In many a lover's evensong:
'Tis beautiful, but never long,
And leaves its imprint on the heart.
A kiss is like unto a flower
Pressed tight between a lover's lips;
And when he of its nectar sips
He ne'er forgets his love's sweet dower.
There are kisses black with treachery,
And those that hide a whip-lash sting,
And evil ones, and ones that ring
As true as steel—as ours should be.
A wandering priest once told me this:
That long ago in a far-off place
A man, be it said to his disgrace,
Betrayed our Saviour with a kiss!

GUMERSINDO. Ah! Marvelous payador and poet!

VICENTA. But he left out one kind of a kiss.

GUMERSINDO. Which was that?

VICENTA. The one he gave to the bottle a little while ago!

CONTRERAS. Comrade, I must confess to you,
I can but wonder at the ease
With which you say the things that please
About a kiss—and that they're new!
But still I cannot feel quite sure
That you are going to win the day.
A question I shall now essay—
Please answer it without delay:
Does life in man after death endure?
So now, my friend, if you are wise
Enough to answer that, I swear
I cannot do aught but declare
That you're the winner of the prize.

Digitized by Google

SANTOS. You must admit that I'm ahead,
And you're afraid to lose the game;
Because you hurry so to name
That point about a man who's dead.
It also seems that you confess
That you are tired and wish to quit;
But I am going to answer it,
And win the game, with cheerfulness:
A man, we'll say, dies on his ranch
Alone, and quite alone has been . . .
Then down from some old withered branch,
A vulture such as you—

CONTRERAS. [*Jumping to his feet indignantly*] Such as your grandmother!

SANTOS. He wants to correct me all of a sudden! "Such as you have often seen," I was going to say, partner!

CONTRERAS. You tried to trip me and throw me off. You can't deny it. But I landed on my feet!

GUMERSINDO. But you lost the contest.

VICENTA. It was a robbery, and he's angry!

CONTRERAS. Up to now I have always won in a singing contest. If I am beaten this time it is because sooner or later a Santos Vega will come to the best of us—one who excels everybody in the art of singing. Leaving him out of it, I am ready to sing with anybody that wants to try it!

VICENTA. Go and sing to your grandmother if you're so crazy to sing.

CONTRERAS. I'll sing to you some day when you least expect it!

[*At this moment the* FIRST SOLDIER, *who had taken advantage of the general distraction at the end of the contest to conceal himself behind* SANTOS VEGA, *attempts to stab him in the back.* CIRILO *sees him and throws* SANTOS *to the ground by a quick push,*

Digitized by Google

and then seizes the dagger hand of the traitor. There is a general commotion.

CIRILO. *Ahijuna!* I caught you just in time!

SOLDIER. Let me go!

CIRILO. Bandit! I ought to kill you!

SANTOS. [*Arising in surprise*] He tried to kill me! Where do you suppose he comes from? And he was going to kill me!

CIRILO. He's a fine traitor, he is!

SANTOS. You must be a foreigner. You can't belong to this country. People in this part of the country don't do things like that, you coward!

GUMERSINDO. Were you going to brag about the fact that you had killed him from behind?

SANTOS. Let him go. He wanted to fight, so let him fight me face to face, like a man!

SOLDIER. [*Remains where he is*] You may kill me, and be sure that you are killing a man. I don't want to fight, though I must always be looking for one! Kill me if you wish, for if you don't I swear I'll get you into trouble.

GUMERSINDO. Have no mercy on him—though I see you are going to.

SOLDIER. I'll keep after you until I see my chance.

SANTOS. Look here, I don't want to kill you! Go, and follow me no more.

RUPERTO. He'll attack you from behind!

CIRILO. He'll be treacherous again!

SANTOS. It would disgust me to kill him. Tears of rage and disgust come to my eyes when I think that there are traitors like him in my country. How can there be? The best country in the world; the land of the singing gauchos and brave horsemen; the land of my love? How could a traitor like that have been born in the same country that has known my love, where I have wept for my sorrows, where so

Digitized by Google

many brave hearts listen to my songs and weep with me in my grief? Who was his unhappy mother whom God has punished with a scoundrel like him for a son? [*Imperiously and threateningly*] Go! and may God speed your death. May there be no cross to mark your grave. May no one know the pain of even suspecting that a man could be born in this country—my country—and turn traitor! [*Changing his tone as he turns to* CIRILO, *much moved*] Allow me to thank you, my good friend, with all my heart. Let me embrace you; you have saved my life.

CIRILO. I owe my liberty to your courage, partner. You saved me first, and won my friendship by doing it.

[*They embrace.*

SANTOS. Now let's have the dance. The girls must forgive me—it's my fault that they haven't danced yet.

CIRILO. It was that traitor's fault.

SANTOS [*To the* GUITAR PLAYERS] Begin with a cielito[1] if you are tuned up. [*The* GUITAR PLAYERS *make ready.*

VICENTA. Choose your partners!

[*Eight couples are formed as follows:* SANTOS *with* ROSA, CIRILO *with the* FIRST GIRL, CONTRERAS *with the* SECOND, RUPERTO *with the* THIRD, GUMERSINDO *with* VICENTA, *the* PATRON *with* RUFINA, *the* FIRST PEON *with the* FOURTH GIRL, *and the* SECOND PEON *with the* FIFTH.

SANTOS. Play your music!

[*The* GUITAR PLAYERS *play a "cielito," while the* FIRST GUITAR PLAYER *sings the following:*

FIRST GUITAR PLAYER.

A cielito now I'll sing,
In honor of the payador,
Our Santos Vega, gaucho brave,
Whose fame has spread from shore to shore.

[1] Cielito: literally, "Little Heaven," a gaucho dance.

Digitized by Google

The girl that he is dancing with
Is dead in love with him, I see;
The light that shines in her dark eyes
Tells me her secret malady.
The other maids are angry, too,
Because they cannot dance with him;
Their partners scarce know what to do,
Their eyes with jealousy are dim.
Ah, cielo, cielito, cielo,
Love is surely most cruel, O!
Ah, Heavens, what exquisite girls!
For ev'ry star that in heaven whirls
There is a flower here on earth.
Of singers, too, there is no dearth!
A cielito now I've sung,
In honor of the payador.
There's no one sings like him, I vow:
His fame has spread from shore to shore!
[*The cielito ends.*

CONTRERAS. [*To his partner*] You never even looked at me when we were dancing the cielito. You make me very unhappy, little one.

SECOND GIRL. That's because I'm afraid to—you've got a face like I don't know what!

CIRILO. [*To his partner*] Thistles and brambles have thorns, and so have your eyes when you look at me.

FIRST GIRL. I haven't looked at you, so how do you know I prick?

VICENTA. [*Interrupting*] Do you think you're a mare to whinny like that?

RUPERTO. I always forget my troubles when I'm with you. I wonder if I'm in love with you!

THIRD GIRL. If you find my company comforting in spite of your troubles, I don't know how to answer you . . .

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. [*Interrupting*] Ask your grandmother!

SANTOS. Should you forget me, I have some black velvet curtains to hang on my bed as mourning.

ROSA. You mustn't say those things to me. They hurt. Why do you wish to mock me?

[ARGENTINA'S *voice is heard in the distance.*

ARGENTINA. Santos!

SANTOS. [*In surprise*] Argentina's voice!

ARGENTINA. [*Nearer*] Santos Vega!

SANTOS. It's she!

FIRST PEON. [*Looking off at right, up stage*] There she is on a horse.

SANTOS. [*Running to meet her*] Argentina!

ARGENTINA. [*Enters, trembling and disheveled*] Santos Vega!

[*They fall into each other's arms.*

VICENTA. Some new piece of bad luck.

SANTOS. Tell me what's the matter, dear?

ARGENTINA. I hardly know. A little while ago I heard a mysterious moan, long and sad like a cry of agony. . . . It was like those voices that touch you to the very soul because, 'tis said, they come from spirits in torment. My heart gave a great leap, for I was afraid that it was you who had cried out—you know my heart is always full of you when you are away from me, dear one. Without a moment's thought I jumped on a horse and came here on the run, weeping, suffering, nervous. . . . And all the time another voice kept telling me: "Go and save him! Hurry! Fly! . . . Your Santos is in great danger!" I'm sure you are . . . Something tells me that this fiesta will bring great harm to you. . . . My heart cannot lie. Let us go back to the ranch. . . . Come with me!

SANTOS. Calm yourself, dear. Your heart did not deceive you, for look! Right where you are standing now, if it hadn't been for Cirilo, I'd have been carved up like a piece of meat!

Digitized by Google

ARGENTINA. Who was it?

CIRILO. A traitor.

ARGENTINA. A traitor in our country!

SANTOS. Yes, a traitor, Argentina. I'd have felt less badly about it had he killed me.

ARGENTINA. My love!

SANTOS. Let no one hear of it.

GUMERSINDO. No, indeed. Shame will keep our mouths shut.

ARGENTINA. But you must be very careful, Santos dear.

JACINTO. [*Who had come out of the pulpería when he heard* ARGENTINA'S *voice, and had been an angry observer of the foregoing*] Greetings, everybody! [*Starts to go*]

RUFINA. Are you going?

JACINTO. Naturally!

SANTOS. Don't go. Come here.

JACINTO. Why should I, after what I've heard?

SANTOS. She loves me!

JACINTO. Let her! All right! I'm going, but, before I do, listen to this, my dear: your singer had no sooner got here—I saw him; I was on the lookout—than he started to make love to another dove. [*Indicating* ROSA]

SANTOS. [*Indignantly*] You lie!

ARGENTINA. [*Jealously*] Santos!

ROSA. It isn't true, Argentina!

JACINTO. [*As he goes out*] Greetings!

SANTOS. [*Running to detain him*] Not yet!

ARGENTINA. [*Restraining him*] His poison never reached my soul. That heart of mine that never lies would have shouted a warning to me. Let him go!

ROSA. Santos Vega only spoke about my eyes, because he said they reminded him of yours . . .

SANTOS. And, besides, Santos Vega always has a verse to offer the women of this land, because they are love, and in

Digitized by Google

them is our race. . . . And now, if everybody is willing I'd like to dance a cielito with *my* little heaven!

[*They again form the couples as before, and once more the* GUITAR PLAYERS *play a cielito.*

FIRST GUITAR PLAYER.

A cielito now I'll sing
In honor of the payador.
There's no one sings like him, I vow:
His fame has spread from shore to shore!

[*As he sings this, the curtain slowly descends.*

Digitized by Google

ACT THREE

Scene One

A drop-curtain painted as the ranchmen's sleeping-quarters. A door in the center. Contreras, Gumersindo, Cirilo, Vicenta, *and several others are discovered. As the curtain rises,* Contreras *sings the following to the tune of* Santos' *song in the Second Act. He accompanies himself on the guitar.*

Contreras. Though bitter sorrow is my lot,
'Twill never, never be my death.
So long as I can draw my breath
I'll sing, and when I sing there's naught
Can kill me: grief most sure cannot.
A payador, I now proclaim
That herein am I known to fame;
And when I sing from my great heart
The bravest fall before my art,
For Santos Vega is my name.

Vicenta. What more could he wish!

Gumersindo. You can never tell.

Cirilo. Where do you suppose Santos Vega is?

Gumersindo. Where he usually is, partner: wandering from place to place, singing, with his horse, his sweetheart, his guitar, and his songs. He has his verses and his guitar and his sweetheart's kisses to comfort his grief. His horse will help him to cross the pampas, his knife will defend his liberty, and his songs will bring peace to his soul. There

Digitized by Google

isn't a creole who won't give him shelter, or a lark that doesn't sing for his consolation, or a girl who will refuse him her heart when she hears him sing. He and his sweetheart may have gone into the desert to subdue the Indians with the sadness of his music. Who knows but what this very minute he may be saving some gaucho's life at the risk of his own? He is like that—always generous, noble, and just. Or perhaps he is singing to his sweetheart beneath some ombú tree. . . . Yet, he must be silent, for if he were singing we should hear him. His verses have wings like doves.

CIRILO. What if he were dead, old man?

GUMERSINDO. He is alive! Santos Vega is the song on the pampa that awakens it before dawn; in his soul are all the desires, all the grief and anxiety, the nobility, the joy, and the sorrow of our race. There isn't an ombú that doesn't know the sound of his guitar, because he has sung beneath them all with a song for each leaf. He is not dead; he lives, for I do not see how the pampas could be silent without him. It would be as if a beautiful woman were to fall in love and feel no pain. If he had died, then why all the finery that adorns his country? Of what use are we without the emotion of his music and the love of his soul? Something would have told us that he no longer breathed—the sun would have gone behind a cloud, the pampas would have veiled themselves in mourning. . . .

RUPERTO. [*Entering cautiously*] Pst! Cirilo—they're here!

CIRILO. Who?

RUPERTO. The police!

CIRILO. Curse them!

RUPERTO. They've already dismounted.

GUMERSINDO. You'd better run for it, my friend.

VICENTA. Don't give yourself up.

[CIRILO *resolves to escape, and runs toward the door, but just as he reaches it the* FIRST SOLDIER *bars his way.*

Digitized by Google

SOLDIER. No, you don't! We'll go to the judge together, if you please!

CIRILO. [*Unsheathing his knife*] Stand aside!

SOLDIER. [*To others outside*] Come in! [*Enter four more* SOLDIERS] You see, my friend? I am in good company. Do you want to put up a fight so I can show you how well I learned my lesson? There are still more outside. Take his knife away from him! [*The* SOLDIERS *start to obey, but* CIRILO *dashes his knife to the floor*] That's the way I like to see you act!

CIRILO. [*Embracing* GUMERSINDO] Good-by, old friend.

SOLDIER. Take him away.

CIRILO. [*Going out with the* SOLDIERS] Come on, you thieves!

SOLDIER. If he tries to run, strike him down. [*A short pause*] Where is the other fighting-cock?

VICENTA. Which one?

SOLDIER. The celebrated singer. Isn't he here?

GUMERSINDO. I swear he hasn't even been here.

SOLDIER. He's in luck!

GUMERSINDO. And you're in better luck still. You've got to be pretty thirsty to drink out of that barrel!

SOLDIER. [*As he goes out*] He'll get his deserts.

GUMERSINDO. [*After a pause*] You'll get yours, too!

RUPERTO. We never get fair play—not even from God, for all that they say He's so good.

GUMERSINDO. That would be the best of all.

VICENTA. It's something priests sell, like goods in a pulpería.

GUMERSINDO. Nobody thinks of us. We're most unfortunate.

FIRST PEON. [*Who has been looking through the door*] They're running off like a pack of Indians.

RUPERTO. [*Looking out*] Cheats! With those horses!

Digitized by Google

GUMERSINDO. Like Indians . . . you're right. They *are* just like Indians!

RUPERTO. Ugh! They are rushing off as if they were going to join an uprising! I can hardly see them now!

GUMERSINDO. We ought to have fought them all.

RUPERTO. What for? They would have taken him just the same. If he hadn't surrendered, they'd have carved him up. Why, they brought a whole troop! They had an idea they were going to find Santos Vega here.

VICENTA. If that brave lad had been here he'd have fought the whole troop!

RUPERTO. He'd have been killed doing it.

GUMERSINDO. But he'd have risked his life gladly to save Cirilo. He'd have shown us that it's a hard job to carve up a bull like him! He's good at singing, but he's a tiger at fighting.

[*Pause.* ARGENTINA, *visibly worn, silently appears in the doorway.*

ARGENTINA. God keep you, good people.

[*They are all pleasantly surprised.*

VICENTA. [*Embracing her*] Argentina!

ARGENTINA. Vicenta!

GUMERSINDO. My child!

ARGENTINA. My old friend!

RUPERTO. What's the news?

VICENTA. What brings you here so suddenly?

RUPERTO. Did you come alone?

FIRST PEON. Where's your singer?

ARGENTINA. [*Sadly*] Ah, my singer!

GUMERSINDO. [*In alarm*] Not dead?

ARGENTINA. [*Exaltedly*] Alive! If I still live, who can conceive of his being dead?

GUMERSINDO. Where is he?

ARGENTINA. Resting.

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. Did he come with you?

ARGENTINA. Would I have come otherwise? I could no more exist without him than there can be light without the sun, perfumes without flowers, songs without singers, cooing without doves, or life without love. So you may be sure that my singer must be alive. He is asleep beneath that dear old ombú where we first met and where he first kissed me.

GUMERSINDO. That's all I need to hear! [*Starts to go out.*

ARGENTINA. [*Detaining him*] Don't wake him up; he is suffering terribly.

GUMERSINDO. What from?

ARGENTINA. From a presentiment that his death is near.

GUMERSINDO. Is it so serious?

ARGENTINA. He has not suffered so in a long time. Somehow or other he seems to have been hurt, badly hurt. He is suffering as he used to before the blessed day when I changed his grief to joy. He weeps as he used to weep. . . . He no longer sings as he did—for love of me. He's so unhappy that he sobs when he sings now. . . .

[*Weeping bitterly,* ARGENTINA *goes out, and, after her, the others.*

SCENE TWO

The drop-curtain rises slowly, disclosing a bit of the pampas. In the center is an enormous ombú, beneath the foliage of which sleeps SANTOS VEGA. *His guitar is leaning against the trunk. His unsaddled horse stands a few paces from him. It is evenfall. In the distance can be seen the crimson splendor of the dying sun. All the persons of the foregoing scene surround the ombú, watching* SANTOS VEGA. ARGENTINA *is at his side.*

ARGENTINA. [*Deeply moved*] Sleep, my love, while your sorrowing friends watch over you. Grief has silenced the cooing

Digitized by Google

of the doves, and even the sun is sinking sadly—slowly dying, bleeding.... The pampas are silent, fearful of disturbing your rest. Near you is your beloved sweetheart. You need fear your presentiment no longer, for all the brave men of your race are here with you. [*Pause.*]

SANTOS. [*In his dreams*] You, here!

GUMERSINDO. Santos Vega!

ARGENTINA. My love!

SANTOS. You cannot do it. No one can defeat me. The best of them yield to me.

RUPERTO. Wake him up.

ARGENTINA. My love!

SANTOS. You *must* yield. No one can defeat me, much less a foreigner. I have always been the victor—no one sings better than I. [*After a pause he bursts into tears*] Argentina! They have beaten your singer!

ARGENTINA. [*Trying to wake him*] Wake up! You are dreaming. Santos, it's I speaking!

SANTOS. [*Wakes in surprise. Sits up, looks slowly about him, and embraces* ARGENTINA] I thought I was having a singing contest with Satan.

GUMERSINDO. Santos!

SANTOS. My old friend! Greetings, everybody!

RUPERTO. You've been dreaming!

SANTOS. [*Absently*] Of course!...

GUMERSINDO. [*Laughing*] Pshaw, my good friend! Why did you shout so?

SANTOS. [*Sadly preoccupied*] It is nothing to laugh about, old friend. It hurts me, for I know that I shall die like that —singing.

GUMERSINDO. *Canejo!* Santos Vega is losing his nerve.

SANTOS. I have never lost my nerve; but the devil is a great singer and he's after me.

GUMERSINDO. And so you don't want me to laugh, partner?

Digitized by Google

SANTOS. Of course not! You see, my friend, if I lose, I die.

GUMERSINDO. But who is going to beat you?

SANTOS. I don't know . . . it's a presentiment. [*Pause. Then, fearfully*] I just dreamed how and who it would be!

GUMERSINDO. Tell us about it.

SANTOS. [*Scarcely master of himself as yet*] It was right here. My darling was at my side, here, beneath the ombú . . . and there were several gauchos, as there are now, listening to my unhappy story. . . . The sun was slowly sinking, just as it is now. Everything was hushed . . . very still. Nothing was heard on the pampas. I was very unhappy, because my presentiment was circling about my head in the shape of a huge, fierce bird. I did not dare to look at it, and, besides, no one else saw it. I was trembling with cold terror, as I am now. . . . Ah! [*Shudders*]

ARGENTINA. [*In alarm*] Santos!

SANTOS. [*Growing more and more excited*] That is just what you said! And I said to you through my tears: Tell me, beloved, you who are my life, the flowers in my path, my dearest song; who soothed me so tenderly; who gave me a new soul; who comforted me in my distress; my sweetheart . . . Argentina dear, if I should die would you keep me in your heart? And you answered . . .

ARGENTINA. [*Interrupting him*] Their aroma outlives the flowers, but if the singer dies, his sweetheart must die, too. But the soul of the singer will never pass away, the winds will vibrate to the echoes of his songs, and in the hearts of all his race the indomitable payador will leave an everlasting memory to prove a menace to the conqueror!

GUMERSINDO. And our whole gaucho soul, strong, and tempered with our grief, will make a banner from a piece of the singer's heaven.

SANTOS. That is just what they all said. But my pre-

Digitized by Google

sentiment overwhelmed me with its torture . . . suddenly . . . they all fell silent. Argentina threw her arms about me as if to defend me. I struggled to get free. My voice choked, and I felt a cold chill in my heart; for, friends, I saw before me a payador from a strange land! But the devil was concealed beneath his clothing. . . . My old friend, you should have heard how beautifully he spoke! And he said his name was Juan Sin Ropa!

JUAN SIN ROPA. [*Suddenly appearing before them*] Who speaks my name?

SANTOS. [*Terrified*] It's he!

GUMERSINDO. [*In alarm*] Santos Vega!

JUAN SIN ROPA. I am a wanderer seeking conquest, glory, and fame. I would vanquish the plains and surmount the Sierras . . . wherever there are peoples to conquer. I would seize the fruits of the land for my own and climb to the topmost peak of the mountains, there to enforce my power over all. I am a new breath that reaches you with the wild fury of a mighty hurricane. The fleetest and most spirited of your horses runs not so swiftly as mine. His tracks scar the earth like fire. They are deep and painful. Later they shall become land wasted by war, or gleam with the gold of generous ears of corn. I bring you new verses of minstrel genius, beautiful songs of triumph, of fortune, of love. . . .

ARGENTINA. We have the songs of our payadors. What do you want with us?

JUAN SIN ROPA. To conquer Santos Vega; for with him out of the way, it will be easier to subdue the others.

ARGENTINA. He is the music and flower of our land!

JUAN SIN ROPA. I am a warrior, but I am also a sower of seeds; and one must pluck flowers in order to sow seeds!

ARGENTINA. One might as well pluck the heart from one's breast . . . but perhaps you have a talon instead of a heart?

JUAN SIN ROPA. I must conquer him!

Digitized by Google

SANTOS. [*Heroically*] No one can do that—least of all a foreigner.

GUMERSINDO. That is like Santos Vega.

SANTOS. [*To* ARGENTINA] Give me my guitar, my love.

[*A moment of profound silence.* ARGENTINA *takes the guitar and, before handing it to the singer, says, with great emotion:*]

ARGENTINA. My payador's dear guitar. You have sung of my love; you have wept when I was sad and laughed when I was happy. How much sorrow is hidden within your silent strings! How often have your chords sounded like the moan of a breaking heart! In moments of passion you have quivered and laughed and sobbed like a living heart beneath his fingers. You must now sing as you have never sung before—proudly, strongly, bravely. . . . With this kiss I now place my soul into the keeping of your strings, guitar of mine!

[*Kisses the guitar. Deeply moved, the famous payador takes the guitar from* ARGENTINA *and sits beneath the legendary ombú. He begins with a prelude with which the deep sobs that escape from his breast are mingled.*

SANTOS. My only joy and truest friend
I find in my well-tuned guitar.
Within its silver strings there are
Sweet melodies that melt and blend,
And stay with me until the end.
Without its solace I should die.
I taught it first to sing, yes, I,
And then to weep and suffer pain;
And when I pass away I fain
Would have it with me where I lie.

JUAN SIN ROPA. [*Declaims the following:*]
Guitar of mine:
Your voice is womanly, sonorous, sweet. . . .

Digitized by Google

Before you came to have your present shape
You were a Moorish maid; in all the world
There breathed no other maid so beautiful.
Small wonder that
As my guitar
You are so skilled in winning love for me.
The first guitar, you were my greatest love.
I first beheld you as that Moorish maid,
A maid divine in body and in soul.
You sing, and men go mad with passion's heat
To hear the beauty of your melting chords.
You sigh as when a maiden yields her love.
You are the people's muse—
And when you laugh, or sob,
Your strings are like a woman's quiv'ring soul.

[*While* JUAN SIN ROPA *recites the foregoing,* SANTOS VEGA *begins to realize that he has met his doom. When the apostrophe is finished,* SANTOS *drops his guitar and presses his hands to his heart.*

ARGENTINA. [*In despair*] Santos! Santos!

SANTOS. [*Sobbing*] Friends, I am beaten!

ARGENTINA. My love!

SANTOS. He is the devil!

GUMERSINDO. Santos Vega

SANTOS. [*With a supreme effort*] But, no—the best of them yield to me! My guitar! [ARGENTINA *again gives it to him.* SANTOS *takes it, embraces it, and makes an effort to play it, but it falls from his hands and he sinks to the ground*] Argentina, he has beaten me!

[*The famous singer dies. The sun scarcely illumines the countryside.*

ARGENTINA. [*Wild with grief, frantic, raving, kisses the face of her lover again and again*] Santos! . . . My life! . . . My soul! . . . My soul! . . .

Digitized by Google

GUMERSINDO. [*Indicating* JUAN SIN ROPA *with a gesture of hatred*] By the looks of him, if he isn't the devil he's worse!

ARGENTINA. [*Standing erect over the body of her lover, as a prophetess she heroically declaims the following symbolic lines to the gauchos*] Weep! For the singer is dead . . . and with him dies his whole race!

[*The gauchos reverently uncover.*

Slow Curtain

Digitized by Google

THE WITCHES' MOUNTAIN

(*La Montaña de Brujas*)

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS

By JULIO SANCHEZ GARDEL

Digitized by Google

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

LEON
DON TADEO
INDA
DANIEL
JUAN DE DIOS
ZOILA
TOBIAS
CAMPOSANTO
PIQUILLÍN
LUPIPA
RUPERTO
Musicians and Guests

SETTING FOR ALL THREE ACTS

A lonely ranch in the Andes.

On the left, down stage, is the entrance to the cook-house. Up stage, on the left, is the entrance to INDA'S *cabin.*

On the right, down stage, is another cabin, DON TADEO'S. *Farther up stage is the men's dormitory. Behind this can be seen part of the foliage of a carob tree.*

A background of mountains. The landscape is desolate, somber, rough, forbidding. Rocks of all shapes and sizes dominate the scene.

Strewn about the stage are tools, lassos, saddles, bridles, saddle pads, harness bells, harness, etc., etc. There is a small rustic table and two or three old straw chairs.

Digitized by Google

THE WITCHES' MOUNTAIN

ACT ONE

Dawn is breaking. PIQUILLÍN *enters from the dormitory rubbing his eyes, crosses to and enters the cook-house; after a moment he reappears, carrying two buckets and goes out, up stage, to the right.*

After a little DANIEL *enters from the cabin on the right, crosses the stage, and disappears, up stage, to the right. He is followed in turn by* JUAN DE DIOS *from the dormitory and* INDA *from her cabin.*

It is now full daylight.

TOBIAS *enters from the left, sits beneath the eaves of* TADEO'S *cabin, and begins to braid a lasso. A moment later* ZOILA *enters from the cook-house, sifting corn.*

ZOILA. Up and at work so early!

TOBIAS. I'm in a hurry to finish braiding this lasso.

ZOILA. Who is it for?

TOBIAS. You can be sure it's not for Leon.

ZOILA. Is it for Daniel?

TOBIAS. The same. He left his down below, and so Don Tadeo wants me to make him one out of the best horsehide. Seeing that it's for *him!* . . .

ZOILA. [*With a certain misgiving*] It seems to me that Don Tadeo doesn't like anybody but Daniel.

TOBIAS. Maybe . . .

Digitized by Google

ZOILA. [*Meaningly*] You know a great deal about Don Tadeo! [TOBIAS *looks at her and shrugs his shoulders*] He didn't sleep here nor anywhere else last night. Just before daybreak I felt sick and went out to look for some myrtle over by the old stone wall, when suddenly, through a clearing, I saw Don Tadeo himself on the Alto del Molle cliff, standing with his arms crossed and looking down. He seemed made of stone. When I came back, there he was, in the same place and in the same position. What could he have been looking at?

TOBIAS. How do I know? . . .

ZOILA. That's where he threw that muleteer over the cliff . . . at the very same hour . . . the same day of the year . . . the same kind of a night . . . and nothing was ever seen of him. Was there? . . . Not even his bones? . . .

TOBIAS. I don't know . . . anything. Why do you speak of those things, eh?

ZOILA. I always remember it like that.

TOBIAS. I don't want to know anything. Didn't I tell you never to speak to me about that, old witch?

ZOILA. You're afraid! [*Laughs*]

TOBIAS. Afraid! . . . Of what?

ZOILA. You . . . or the devil ought to know.

TOBIAS. I'm talking to him now.

ZOILA. Secrets are like poison, Tobias: they kill if you keep them inside you.

Enter INDA, *up stage, carrying a bucket of milk*

INDA. Has Leon got back yet, Father?

TOBIAS. No.

INDA. He said he would get back today.

TOBIAS. He may yet; the sun isn't very high.

ZOILA. Is that milk for breakfast?

INDA. No, it's for making curds.

ZOILA. You know, Tobias . . . secrets . . . Ha! Ha! . . .

Digitized by Google

[ZOILA *goes out.* INDA *puts the bucket of milk on a bench at the left.*

INDA. [*Coming closer*] Father!

TOBIAS. Yes?

INDA. I'm afraid.

TOBIAS. You, too! Since when? You've never been afraid before.

INDA. Since Daniel got back.

TOBIAS. Daniel? What for?

INDA. I don't know . . . but when he looks at me his eyes . . .

TOBIAS. Like his father's? Has he Don Tadeo's eyes, Inda?

INDA. No, they're not the same. Don Tadeo's eyes are cold. Daniel doesn't look at me like that. His eyes burn —like fire.

TOBIAS. No, Inda, that can't be so.

INDA. Yes, Father, I'm right. They look like cat's eyes in the dark.

TOBIAS. But doesn't he know that you are going to marry his brother Leon? Haven't you told him?

INDA. Yes, he knows it. . . . I told him and he laughed . . . like Don Tadeo. . . . The same kind of a laugh!

TOBIAS. Poor Leon! He has enough troubles already.

INDA. [*After a pause*] Then why don't we go away, Father? Why live like this?

TOBIAS. Go away? Did you say go away?

INDA. I did.

TOBIAS. Go away! Do you suppose I can leave? My poor child! You don't know what holds me here. . . . You don't know! Why, it's killing me. . . . I only wish it would soon end this miserable life of mine! Why should I want to live? Eh? I can never be my own master. . . . The other is always with me, telling me what I must do, and *he* doesn't want me to go away because he's afraid of what I know, Inda. . . . And I know so many things!

Digitized by Google

INDA. Are you bewitched, Father?

TOBIAS. I'm beginning to think I am.

INDA. But who has bewitched you?

TOBIAS. Who? Don Tadeo—the devil himself!

INDA. [*Frightened*] Father!

TOBIAS. Yes, the devil himself! Himself! He has me in his power, chained to his will. Those eyes of his that look so cold and faded have the power of snakes. You have to give in, and he makes you do anything he wants. When he looks at you it's just as if he stabbed you with a knife . . . it gives you a cold chill. . . . So far, I have never seen a man who could stand up to him. When I was a lad I used to see him when he had to break in a wild colt, one of those animals that won't even stand a flea on their back; all he did was to take him by the ears, look at him hard, and jump on his back. The colt would foam at the mouth like a madman at first, but finally he would give up and cave in like a heap of straw. He has the same power, only more so, over women. Whenever he took a fancy to one and complimented her a couple of times, she was like putty. And the worst of it is they hated him and loved him at the same time. I've never seen a man with more nerve. They always ran away from him as from the devil, but then they'd come back and grovel at his feet and insult him in the worst way right to his face. But he just kept on laughing and laughing with that same hollow laugh of his and looking at them with his small eyes. It's a good thing that Daniel has his mother's eyes—it certainly is! But in everything else he is just like Don Tadeo, Inda, and I wouldn't want you to have the agony of crawling to his feet and groveling. No, Inda, my child, I wouldn't want to see you like that. Before I would allow that I'd put out your eyes with thorns so you couldn't see his eyes, and then, if he still bewitched you with his desire, I'd choke you with all my strength, with my two hands, like this . . . and break

Digitized by Google

your neck as I would a chicken's . . . and then I'd throw you from the cliff—from the highest peak, so you would have farther to fall!

INDA. Don Tadeo!

[DON TADEO, *somber, with his arms crossed, appears up stage.*

TADEO. [*After a pause*] Where are you going?

INDA. I'm going after some fig leaves to curdle the milk with. [*Goes out, up stage, to the right.*

TADEO. [*After a pause*] Have you seen anything on Alto Grande, old man?

TOBIAS. On—?

TADEO. The same.

TOBIAS. I've seen nothing.

TADEO. You don't go up there often, do you?

TOBIAS. No, indeed. [*Pause*]

TADEO. [*Laughing*] Are you afraid of the dead man?

TOBIAS. I?

TADEO. Doesn't he keep you company sometimes at night, when you're alone?

TOBIAS. No.

TADEO. You're luckier than I am. Last night I was alone in my room . . . I couldn't sleep, so I lit the candle. Suddenly I heard some one knocking. "Come in!" I called. The door stayed shut, but something came into the room. I saw my saddle-bags move as if some one was going through them, and then my candle went out. [*A short pause*] What do you think of that? I started to laugh all by myself like a madman, but then I got angry and went over there . . . understand? . . . to see if I could find anything. I saw nothing. All the better for him—for once I get my hands on a fellow, I tell you he never gets up again. I'm disgusted with him. He never lets me sleep now, and I can't tend to the affairs of the ranch. I've thought of Daniel in that connection; of letting

Digitized by Google

him have charge. All these things trouble me a lot inside, for all that I seem to laugh.

TOBIAS. What about Leon?

TADEO. What for? Daniel is very capable, and very much of a man . . . in every way!

TOBIAS. So is Leon.

TADEO. Daniel is more than good enough! [*A short pause*] I know what you're getting at. But it will be a great deal better in every way for you and for . . . Inda.

TOBIAS. For me and Inda?

TADEO. More for Inda than for you.

TOBIAS. No, not that! I won't have it! No, Don Tadeo, no!

TADEO. [*Laughing*] Bah! Don't be a baby, old man!

TOBIAS. But Leon is your son, too!

TADEO. [*Dramatically*] My son! [*Again laughs*] My son! Have you forgotten the affair on the cliff already?

TOBIAS. No; it wasn't so! He *is* your son! Your son!

TADEO. [*Still laughing*] Don't be a baby! My son, indeed! [*Enter* PIQUILLIN *with a bucket of milk, up stage. He starts to enter the cook-house*] Laugh! You laugh, too! [PIQUILLIN *laughs idiotically*] That's funny! My son! Don't be a baby, old man!

[*Goes out at right, laughing bitterly, striking with his whip at everything in his way.* INDA *enters a moment later.*

INDA. [*To* TOBIAS, *who stands at one side of the stage, discouraged and gloomy*] What's the matter, Father? What did Don Tadeo say to you?

TOBIAS. Why should I tell you? Why trouble you? I have no will power . . . I am like that rock . . . I am speechless! I must keep on chewing the poison I have within me! My poor child! My poor child!

Enter DANIEL *and* JUAN DE DIOS

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. [*With a sarcastic laugh*] That's all right; it was nothing; just a tumble. Rub a little tallow on it tonight. But who put you up to such things? Tune up your strings and sing the best you know how, but don't try to play the brave man with me.

Enter PIQUILLIN

INDA. What happened?

DANIEL. Why, I invited this lad to take a ride on Malacara, and he accepted the invitation. "Look out or he'll throw you," I said; and the lad, who had been talking and boasting a good deal, answered, "I can do what others can do." . . . What others can do, indeed! Don't make me laugh!" . . . He had no sooner got on his back than Malacara gave a jump and landed him on his head in the mud. [PIQUILLIN *laughs stupidly*] It certainly was laughable! You should have seen his face, Inda, when he got up! His own mother wouldn't have known him!

JUAN DE DIOS. [*Threateningly, to* PIQUILLIN] What are *you* laughing at?

DANIEL. [*Imperiously*] Let the boy alone. What are you mad at? Can't you see I'm laughing, too? [*To* PIQUILLIN] That's enough. [*Pause*] It was your good luck that you didn't hit the stone wall. Riding Malacara! But, do you know what it is to break a mountain colt? You've got to have a lot of strength here, and here; you've got to guess what he's going to do so as to jump on his back, for the animal guesses, too, and knows who is going to mount him; and, above all, my lad, you've got to have nerve—which you haven't! [*Provocatively*]

JUAN DE DIOS. [*Threateningly*] I haven't?

DANIEL. Look at him! He's angry! Don't be offended, my lad; it wasn't such a bad fall. Why should we fight now? Wait for another reason [*meaningly, for* INDA'S *benefit*] which we'll be sure to have—and then we'll fight

Digitized by Google

if you want to. What the devil! I can't contradict my own guest!

JUAN DE DIOS. Whenever you wish. I'm not afraid of you.

DANIEL. Fine!

JUAN DE DIOS. I'm not Malacara!

DANIEL. Splendid! That's what I have *this* for [*draws his knife*] when my hands fail me. Don't misunderstand me. Look at it; we're not going to fight now. Take hold of it. Try to bend the point. Not even you can do it! [*To* PIQUILLIN] Nobody can. Test it! See how heavy it is, old man. It goes in easy and would cut stone. [*He chips the table with a blow*] Don't *you* be afraid of it, Inda! Take hold of it!

INDA. Afraid? I'm not afraid of any one.

DANIEL. Not even of me?

INDA. Not of any one, I tell you!

DANIEL. [*Laughing*] I like that! You're just like me, Inda, just like me!

Enter DON TADEO

TADEO. [*To* TOBIAS] Here, old man, saddle up the mule and go over to Morrito de la Esquina and get Pastor, the blind man, with the two musicians who were playing at a baby's wake the night before last, then go over to Lupipa's and tell her that I said to bring down all her girls to the dance I'm giving tomorrow. Go now, before the sun gets any hotter. [*To* PIQUILLIN] Go and cut some carob beans so old Zoila can make aloja;[1] we want to have it good and strong for tomorrow. You have time to get back for breakfast. [*Exit* PIQUILLIN *up stage to the right*] Ah, old man, tell them that Daniel has got back from down below, and that the dance is for him.

[*Exit* TOBIAS, *up stage to the right.*

DANIEL. Now's your chance, my lad, if you want to shake your hoofs.

[1] Aloja: a refreshing beverage made from carob beans.

Digitized by Google

JUAN DE DIOS. Thanks.

TADEO. You certainly should want to; when I was your age I could dance on the end of a finger-nail. [*Moves up stage.*

DANIEL. Where are you going, Father?

TADEO. To the corral to treat the cattle for vermin. Coming?

DANIEL. Yes.

[*After glancing disdainfully at* INDA *and* JUAN DE DIOS, *he goes out, up stage, to the right.*

INDA. Why do you act like that, Juan de Dios? What's the matter with you?

JUAN DE DIOS. What's the matter with me? Hatred, Inda. I have a whole lot of it stored up in here. I have never been able to have anything else; that's all that men and life have given me. I have always thought how much better it would be if I had been a bird or a rock; then I shouldn't have had to flounder about with this cargo of hatred and pain. You know they call me Juan de Dios. My parents, if I ever had any, knew what they were doing when they called me that. Juan de Dios, Juan of everybody and nobody at the same time; Juan of the wind, Juan of the mountain, Juan of the rivers and hills, even Juan of the devil, to whom I wish I might sell my soul so as to mean something to some one, not just nothing to nobody. They told me to travel, and so I go from sierra to sierra, from slope to slope, from ranch to ranch, seeking some spot where I may rest, tired already of this endless wandering, with my guitar for my only companion and comfort. And this wandering of mine has brought me to you, the only good soul I've ever seen. Even before I saw you I knew you, and all my songs, all my sighs, the finest things I found on my way—all were for you. For you were the foam on the swollen mountain streams, the blue daisies, the sweetest notes of the lark, the clearest waters of the cascades, the brightest stars in

Digitized by Google

the night sky. And then, Inda, I knew hatred, more hatred than ever before, because I felt a better man. But now I am here, and now I have met you.

INDA. No, Juan de Dios; that can never be—never.

JUAN DE DIOS. Never? It *must* be, Inda; it must be! That's all I have lived for! I wouldn't know where to go alone after this. Don't you understand that that life of yours is my very own? It is my life that I am fighting for, Inda.

INDA. No, Juan de Dios; you know that Leon loves me, and that I am going to marry him. . . .

JUAN DE DIOS. No, Inda; nobody, nothing can take you away from me! I haven't much strength in my arms, but I have another kind of strength that is capable of doing more than bodily strength. I hate much. . . . I am wicked, Inda. . . . I have the strength of evil that also kills men . . . it's like many knives put together . . . and they all wound at the same time. You think I'm weak because Daniel, who also loves you, humiliated me before you! Inda, Inda, I'll arm myself with a stronger arm than mine, stronger than Daniel's —much stronger! You'll be mine, mine! We'll defend our love beneath some great peak, in some rocky cave—for the sierra is not so evil as men.

Enter DANIEL.

DANIEL. [*Taking him by the shoulder*] Listen, my lad!

INDA. Daniel!

DANIEL. What? I'm not going to do anything to him; he's not man enough for me. Can't you see my hands are more than enough for him? I want to tell him something. Come!

JUAN DE DIOS. [*On one side of the stage*] What is it?

DANIEL. That woman Inda is for me! Do you hear? For me!

JUAN DE DIOS. No, she's not for you.

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. For you, then?

JUAN DE DIOS. For neither of us.

DANIEL. Who, then?

JUAN DE DIOS. One who is more of a man than either of us!

DANIEL. [*Almost shouting*] Who? Who?

JUAN DE DIOS. Leon!

DANIEL. Nobody is stronger than I am except my father, and Leon is not my father. I'll take her away from you both before your very eyes. What's the use of beating around the bush, eh?

JUAN DE DIOS. Before his very eyes, you say?

DANIEL. Yes! But, meanwhile, you stop sneaking around. Any time you want to fight, I'm ready!

JUAN DE DIOS. Why should I? I'm not strong; you're a bigger man than I am!

DANIEL. It's a good thing you know it. [*Exit to the right.*

JUAN DE DIOS. Inda, I, too, am beginning to be strong.

INDA. No—I don't love you, and nobody can have me against my will.

JUAN DE DIOS. My will is stronger than yours, Inda. [*Takes her hands.*

INDA. No! I tell you I don't like you! Let go of me! Either you or I will die first!

[*Goes out rapidly, up stage, to the right, taking her jar with her.*

JUAN DE DIOS. It's the only thing, Inda; it's the only thing! Death can do more than men! But first.... first!...

After a pause enter ZOILA

ZOILA. What makes you so sad, my lad?

JUAN DE DIOS. I'm sick.

ZOILA. And you so young?

JUAN DE DIOS. Old people don't suffer from my malady.

ZOILA. Then some girl has bewitched you.

JUAN DE DIOS. It's called love.

Digitized by Google

ZOILA. I know that sickness well.

JUAN DE DIOS. Do you know the cure for it?

ZOILA. I've known it for years.

JUAN DE DIOS. Have you helped many?

ZOILA. Everybody.

JUAN DE DIOS. Is it the devil's cure?

ZOILA. Why ask, if it cures you?

JUAN DE DIOS. That's true.

ZOILA. Who made you sick?

JUAN DE DIOS. A woman.

ZOILA. I understand that, but where does she live?

JUAN DE DIOS. Right here.

ZOILA. Inda?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

ZOILA. Then the cure will have to be double strength. There are many down with that same sickness.

JUAN DE DIOS. When will you give it to me?

ZOILA. Are you in a hurry?

JUAN DE DIOS. Very much so.

ZOILA. Tonight at midnight.

JUAN DE DIOS. Can't you make it sooner?

ZOILA. I cannot.

JUAN DE DIOS. Very good, then. Where shall I wait for you?

ZOILA. By the Devil's Cross.

JUAN DE DIOS. The Devil's Cross!

ZOILA. Are you afraid?

JUAN DE DIOS. I'm not over-confident; but if it will cure me, I'll wait for you there.

ZOILA. I'll be there.

[Cuts off a piece of meat and goes into the cook-house. Enter LEON *looking anxiously for some one*

JUAN DE DIOS. Ah! Leon!

LEON. Good-morning. Are you still here?

Digitized by Google

JUAN DE DIOS. So it would seem. Who are you looking for?

LEON. Where is Inda? [*Meaningly*] You haven't seen her, have you?

JUAN DE DIOS. She went out with a jar, probably to the waterfall to get some water.

LEON. Zoila!

ZOILA. Are you back?

LEON. Can't you see I am? If you have any stew left, give some to the dog; he hasn't had a mouthful of food since yesterday.

[*ZOILA goes into the cook-house and returns with a small iron pot. She goes out, up stage, to the right.*

JUAN DE DIOS. You seem disgusted to find me here.

LEON. I'm not pleased.

JUAN DE DIOS. I am to see you, though.

LEON. Pleased to see me?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

LEON. I don't understand.

JUAN DE DIOS. You seem to distrust me.

LEON. Perhaps.

JUAN DE DIOS. There's no reason for it.

LEON. No reason for it?

JUAN DE DIOS. I'm not speaking of formerly.

LEON. But now?

JUAN DE DIOS. Now there is no reason.

LEON. [*Looks at him as though seeking the truth in his eyes*] No? So you no longer care for Inda?

JUAN DE DIOS. I no longer care for her.

LEON. [*Gladly*] Are you telling the truth?

JUAN DE DIOS. Positively. I am your friend.

[*Holds out his hand*

LEON. My friend?

JUAN DE DIOS. Don't you believe me?

Digitized by Google

LEON. You see, I've never had any friend but my dog. You are the only one!

JUAN DE DIOS. I'll prove myself one.

LEON. Good! If that is the case, I'm glad.

JUAN DE DIOS. So am I. [*A short pause*]

LEON. What does Inda say? Did she think of me?

JUAN DE DIOS. No.

LEON. [*Hurt*] She didn't?

JUAN DE DIOS. At least, I don't know.

LEON. She didn't think of me! [*A short pause*] Is there any news?

JUAN DE DIOS. Nothing, except . . .

LEON. What?

JUAN DE DIOS. Daniel is back.

LEON. Daniel! Did he get back?

JUAN DE DIOS. The day after you left. . . . Don Tadeo is giving a dance tomorrow in honor of his return. [*Pause*] Aren't you pleased at the news? [*Pause*] I don't blame you for not being pleased.

LEON. Why?

JUAN DE DIOS. It's plain enough.

LEON. No; you know more and you won't tell me. Why do you say you are my friend, then?

JUAN DE DIOS. I don't want to worry you.

LEON. The thorn has already penetrated. Why do you hold back now? Daniel also loves her . . . is that it? Answer me!

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes, that's it. He is after her. Why deny it?

LEON. And what does Inda say? What does she say?

JUAN DE DIOS. I don't know . . . I don't know . . .

LEON. Now I understand why she didn't think of me!

JUAN DE DIOS. Tadeo seems to like it. And he's your father, too.

Digitized by Google

LEON. My father!

JUAN DE DIOS. Daniel is head over heels in love with her.

LEON. But he knows that Inda is mine! Why does he want to take away what is mine . . . the only thing I have . . . the only thing I love? Hasn't he always been master here? Hasn't he always had everything he wanted? But not Inda— No, no!

JUAN DE DIOS. He says he is going to take her away from you.

LEON. From me? Juan de Dios!

JUAN DE DIOS. And that he is more of a man than you are.

LEON. Juan de Dios! No! . . . No!

JUAN DE DIOS. And that that is why he carries a knife that will cut stone . . .

LEON. No! . . . He's my brother . . . even if he hates me . . . he's my brother . . .

JUAN DE DIOS. And that he's going to take her away before you and everybody else.

LEON. Before me? Where I can see? Does he think I'll let him? No! The hills would fall first, and the earth open. Blood would flow from the rocks! And who are you? Why do you tell me such things? Why do you talk like this to me? Don't you understand that he's my brother? Don't you see that I cannot kill him? Who are you to stir up my blood and instigate me to murder? Who are you?

JUAN DE DIOS. Haven't I told you that I am your friend?

LEON. Friend! Then it isn't so pleasant, after all, to have a friend. He makes you feel so bitterly! Well, at all events, I thank you for your kindness.

JUAN DE DIOS. Don't mention it.

[He goes out slowly, enjoying the effect of his remarks. Enter INDA *from the left, with the jar on her head.* LEON *has seated himself upon a rock with his back*

Digitized by Google

to INDA. ZOILA *passes from up stage into the cook-house.*

INDA. [*Very glad to see* LEON] Leon! Are you back? I've been expecting you since yesterday.

LEON. Me?

INDA. Yes, you, Leon.

LEON. What for?

INDA. Leon, are you ill? What's the matter?

LEON. Nothing.

INDA. Aren't you glad to see me? Why are you silent? What is the matter with you?

LEON. I'd have been happier if I hadn't come back; if I were still far away from here.

INDA. But why don't you look at me?

LEON. Why should I?

INDA. Don't you love me any more?

LEON. Ask yourself the same thing.

INDA. Why? I love you and always have loved you. . . . Why should I ask myself that, if even when I'm asleep I keep saying, "I love you, I love you"?

LEON. Is it true, Inda, that you love me, that you will go on loving me, that you thought of me, and that all these days that I have been away you haven't looked at any one else, that you are mine, mine alone? Is it true that you won't leave me to go off with another? Is it true, Inda? Speak . . . don't worry me any more . . . speak . . .

INDA. My poor Leon—you ask me if I really love you. Why, you mean everything to me. There's nobody in the whole world better than you are. You've got a bigger heart than any other man I know, and a stronger arm to protect me. That's why you are called Leon: you're good, and you're strong! That's why I love you!

LEON. Inda, Inda! [*Frantically kisses her hair, her sleeves, her apron. Tears come into his eyes, which he wipes away with*

Digitized by Google

the back of his hand. He speaks in a torrent of words] Mine, mine alone! Look, Inda, look at all I brought you to show you that I thought of you. [*Taking them out of his saddle-bags and throwing them into her lap*] Honey and daisies. Here is a bit of chinchilla fur. See this blood-colored flower. I nearly fell off the cliff when I picked it. Here is an air flower. This is sugar-cane, and . . . and that's all there is . . . because there wasn't anything else on the sierra. If there had been, I'd have brought it to you.

[INDA *fills out the dialogue with appropriate remarks.*

Enter DON TADEO, *up stage*

LEON. [*With instinctive fear*] Father!

TADEO. So you're back!

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. How many cows did you round up?

LEON. Nearly all of them.

TADEO. Which ones are missing?

LEON. Barrosa and Brava.

TADEO. Where are they?

LEON. I ran them as far as Piedra Herrada. They've hidden in the hills and hardly ever come down to the Chilcas water-hole; and because the hill was very rough, I left them.

TADEO. That's no excuse for your taking so long. You need breaking in. [*Pause*] Did you know that Daniel was back?

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. Did you know that he is going to be in charge from now on? [*A short pause*] Did you know, I say?

LEON. I just this minute came . . .

TADEO. Very well—you know now. [*Starts to go.*

LEON. Father!

TADEO. What? [*Looks at him domineeringly.*

LEON. Nothing! [*Strikes his hat with his hand.*

Digitized by Google

TADEO. The better for you! Inda, tell Zoila it's time for breakfast. I don't feel like any myself.

[*Goes out at right.* INDA *does as she was told. Enter* PIQUILLIN *with the carob beans, which he takes into the cook-house.* INDA *appears with dishes, spoon, and bread.* LEON *sits upon a rock at left.*

INDA. [*Pointing to the table*] This place is for you.

LEON. No, Inda, not there; I couldn't swallow my food. I'll eat here on this rock.

[ZOILA *serves the stew from the pot.* INDA *crosses to the right.*

INDA. Daniel, the stew is on the table.

[PIQUILLIN *seats himself on another rock.*

LEON. [*To* INDA] Where are you going to eat?

INDA. I don't feel like eating, Leon.

Enter JUAN DE DIOS, *who sits near* LEON. *Enter* DANIEL

DANIEL. [*Catching sight of* LEON] Ah! So you're back!

LEON. [*Drops his spoon*] It's you!

DANIEL. Well, won't you sit down with me? [*Pointing to a place at the table.*]

LEON. I can eat here just as well.

DANIEL. [*Sitting down*] Very well. [*Meaningly*] Did Father tell you that I have the say here, and that I'm in charge of everything?

LEON. Of everything?

DANIEL. Of everything! Now you know! Inda, bring a little wine to celebrate the news. [INDA *goes out*] And you, my friend [*to* JUAN DE DIOS] are eating quietly so as not to lose time, eh?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

Enter INDA

DANIEL. Serve it. Take this glass to Leon, and the other to that lad. [*She does so.* JUAN DE DIOS *drinks.*

LEON. I don't care for any.

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. [*With a sneer*] Are you going to scorn such pretty hands? [LEON *looks at* INDA *and drinks his wine at a gulp.* DANIEL *laughs. To* INDA] Aren't you going to eat?

INDA. I don't feel like it.

DANIEL. Sit down here, then.

INDA. What for, if I don't wish to eat?

DANIEL. Sit down here!

[LEON *throws his spoon down in a rage. Then he recovers himself.*

DANIEL. [*To* LEON, *irritatingly*] What's the matter with you? [*Sits down again and pours* INDA *a glass of wine*] Inda, you're going to drink this little bit of wine to my health.

INDA. I told you I didn't want anything.

DANIEL. Just a little swallow and that's all.

INDIA. I can't! I don't want to!

DANIEL. I tell you to take it!

[INDA *hesitates, looks about her nervously and starts to lift the glass to her lips. There is a silence of deep expectation. Then* LEON *jumps to his feet with a roar, takes the glass from her hand, and dashes it to pieces on the ground.*

LEON. No! I'll not have it! I'll not have it!

DANIEL. Ha! . . . Ha! . . . Ha!

LEON. Inda is mine!

DANIEL. She belongs to whoever is the strongest! To the best man! [*Draws his knife.*]

LEON. She's mine, mine, mine! No one can take her away from me!

DANIEL. I can!

LEON. No one!

DANIEL. [*Brandishing his knife*] Ha! . . . Ha!

[LEON, *beside himself, leaps upon* DANIEL, *takes his knife away, breaks it, and throws away the pieces.*

LEON. Now!

Digitized by Google

[*Attacks* DANIEL *with his fists.* DANIEL *retreats, very nearly beaten, and terrified at* LEON'S *strength.* DON TADEO *sees what is going on, and rushes at* LEON *with a savage shout.*

TADEO. Leon! Curse you!

LEON. He wanted to take her away from me, Father!

TADEO. Nothing belongs to you here!

LEON. Inda is mine, Father, she's mine!

TADEO. I told you that you own nothing here!

LEON. [*Threatening him with his fists*] Father!

TADEO. [*Subduing him with a gesture, a word, a look*] Nothing!

[LEON *lowers his arms, and then, by the sheer force of his clenched fists, he makes the table creak and finally break and fall, carrying everything with it to the ground. Then, enraged at his very helplessness, he throws himself upon the rock and sobs aloud.* DON TADEO *laughs with his cold, vague laugh.* JUAN DE DIOS, *at one side of the stage, smiles craftily.*

Curtain

Digitized by Google

ACT TWO

Same as Act One. It is afternoon. ZOILA *is on the left, grinding corn in a mortar.* TOBIAS *is on the right, cutting up a sheep.* JUAN DE DIOS *stands near* ZOILA.

JUAN DE DIOS. You'll have to give me another cure. The one you gave me was no good.

ZOILA. It wasn't?

JUAN DE DIOS. No.

ZOILA. When did you give it to her?

JUAN DE DIOS. This morning.

ZOILA. In her maté?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

ZOILA. And Inda . . .?

JUAN DE DIOS. Doesn't love me—or, rather, she hates me. It looks as if your cure worked the wrong way.

ZOILA. Don't be in a hurry . . . I've got a better one.

JUAN DE DIOS. What is it?

ZOILA. Do you know Señor Camposanto?

JUAN DE DIOS. That old man who carries dead persons to the cemetery down below?

ZOILA. The same.

JUAN DE DIOS. I haven't seen him since last year.

ZOILA. Well, you must look for him.

JUAN DE DIOS. Where is he?

ZOILA. I don't know; it's a long time since he came by here . . . not since Calixto died. He'd rather go around by the rough hill road. He says it's better for the corpses. If you find him, tell him to bring me the usual thing from down below.

Digitized by Google

JUAN DE DIOS. What is that?

ZOILA. He knows!

JUAN DE DIOS. It hasn't anything to do with dead people, has it? [*The old witch laughs.*

ZOILA. Dead people! It's the only thing they're good for: to cure the living.

JUAN DE DIOS. No, Zoila; not that!

ZOILA. No?

JUAN DE DIOS. I wouldn't mind if it came from the devil.

ZOILA. So I thought! [*Laughs.*]

JUAN DE DIOS. Don't laugh, Zoila. There are some things that no one should laugh at.

[*He goes out slowly, glancing about him as if looking for some one. The witch laughs meaningly as she pours the corn into the sack.*

ZOILA. Where is Don Tadeo?

TOBIAS. He's taking his siesta.

ZOILA. Of course, seeing that he can't sleep nights!

TOBIAS. What do you know about it?

ZOILA. A great deal! Don Tadeo can't sleep nights any more. All he does is to roll from one side of his cot to the other and talk to himself, moving his arms as if he were fighting somebody you couldn't see.

TOBIAS. What does he say?

ZOILA. Bah! What you know . . . always the same thing . . . as if he were trying not to forget it. [*A short pause*] It seems to me, Tobias, that this place will turn into a regular witches' cave where all the devils in the country will come to live.

TOBIAS. All the better for you; you'll be in good company then.

ZOILA. It will be the better for all of us, and you, too. These rocks are accursed. I tell you the things you see here at night are enough to scare you to death!

Digitized by Google

TOBIAS. If you weren't an old owl you wouldn't see anything . . .

ZOILA. Owl or not, I'm the only one around here who laughs, and the more the others cry, the more I laugh. Ha! Ha! Ha! [*Goes into the cook-house.*

TOBIAS. Devil! . . . Witch! . . . You'll end by damning all our souls! [*Enter* LEON *from the dormitory. He is morose and gloomy*] Where did you come from? Have you been taking your siesta?

LEON. I lay down awhile to see if I could sleep a bit, but I couldn't. I've been like this ever since midnight.

TOBIAS. Have you seen something, too?

LEON. What?

TOBIAS. I don't know; some of old Zoila's witchcraft. . . .

LEON. No, old man; what I saw wasn't witchcraft.

TOBIAS. What did you see? [*A short pause*] Why are you silent?

LEON. I woke up very early this morning . . . it was still dark. I had my saddle out under the carob tree. The night was very clear, and I was looking up at Alto Grande. Pretty soon a cloud began to cover the mountain, but only on one side. It went on gathering and gathering, until suddenly I saw that it had taken the shape of a woman, very tall and dressed in white. It seemed to be standing right there. It wore a cloak that reached to the ground. Then I got up and went up there; but as soon as I came close, the phantom began to melt away until I couldn't see it any more. Then the cloud spread over the whole mountain until it completely covered it.

TOBIAS. [*After a pause*] Well, that woman . . .?

LEON. Was my mother, old man; my mother!

TOBIAS. But you never knew her, hardly ever saw her. . . . Who told you . . .?

Digitized by Google

LEON. No one; but it was my mother. Every time I have thought of her I have seen her like that. [*A short pause.*

TOBIAS. Have you been thinking about all this lately?

LEON. Yes. Tell me, old man—why do souls appear like that?

TOBIAS. Why? They say they appear like that when the body was not buried in consecrated ground or when they were killed in an evil manner. . . . They come back to ask for revenge.

LEON. Could that be why my mother appeared to me?

TOBIAS. What's that you said?

LEON. Once I heard that my father made her suffer cruelly; that he watched her with everybody who passed this way; that he even rolled some big rocks into the old path so no one could come near the ranch. [*Pause*] If it were true! Whenever I ask about it, nobody cares to answer me. . . . Just as you, old man, are silent now.

TOBIAS. What do you want me to tell you? I don't know a thing. . . . I haven't heard a thing. . . . I haven't seen a thing!

LEON. If it were true! [*In a low voice*] Listen, old man; sometimes when I have been thinking hard about all the wicked things my father has done I suddenly see him at the foot of a cliff, dead, his face covered with blood, and with condors and crows pecking at his eyes and entrails. Then, old man, I am glad, glad to see him like that, where he can do no more harm or bring sorrow to any one.

TOBIAS. He's your father, Leon.

LEON. My father! I wish he weren't! Why is he my father? . . . Last night I went to bed firmly resolved to take Inda away with me today Deep down in the big canyon I have a sort of stone hut built in among the rocks. Why stay here? Everybody wants to take her away from me: even Father wants her to marry Daniel.

TOBIAS. Not that! Inda marry Daniel? Not even if Don

Digitized by Google

Tadeo wishes it. . . . Not even if he commands it! No! It sha'n't be! I'll tell him so myself . . . today!

LEON. That's why I wanted to go away—so I wouldn't fight somebody; but now that I have seen my mother, I'm going to stay. I want to find out why she appeared to me. And never you fear, nobody will take Inda away from me—not even my father! Don't worry, old man; that's what I am here for! [*Goes slowly up stage.*

Enter DON TADEO

TADEO. Haven't you finished cutting up that sheep yet?

TOBIAS. No.

TADEO. Hurry up with it; the guests will be coming before long. Roast it yourself under the carob tree. They'll be hungry. We'll have the dance afterward. [*To* LEON] Where are you going? Bring a load of wood to roast the sheep with. Bring big wood. [LEON *goes out, up stage, to the right*] What was he saying to you?

TOBIAS. To me?

TADEO. Yes, to you.

TOBIAS. He was telling me that he saw his mother early this morning.

TADEO. His mother!

TOBIAS. Yes.

TADEO. [*After a pause*] He saw her himself?

TOBIAS. Yes. [*Pause*]

TADEO. Good! [*Starts to go*]

TOBIAS. Don Tadeo!

TADEO. What is it?

TOBIAS. I want to talk to you.

TADEO. Talk away. What do you want?

TOBIAS. To tell you that Leon and Inda love each other and that I have arranged for them to be married as soon as possible.

TADEO. Aha! You have arranged it?

Digitized by Google

TOBIAS. Yes; I wanted to notify you.

TADEO. And what for?

TOBIAS. So you would know it. You seem to have thought of something else. . . .

TADEO. What have I thought of?

TOBIAS. That Inda was to marry Daniel.

TADEO. Very well. What is there wrong with that?

TOBIAS. I tell you I'm her father and I've already arranged it with Leon!

TADEO. You've been in a great hurry, old man. Things done in a hurry never turn out well.

TOBIAS. What are you trying to tell me?

TADEO. Can't you understand that Daniel is going to be patron now?

TOBIAS. Very good; let him!

TADEO. And that Inda will gain by the change?

TOBIAS. No, Don Tadeo. I have always done everything you wanted me to. . . . Not this, Don Tadeo! Not with my daughter! [DON TADEO *laughs*] I've suffered a great deal. I don't want my daughter to be unhappy.

TADEO. [*Harshly*] What did you say?

TOBIAS. Not that, Don Tadeo . . . anything you like except that. Inda doesn't love Daniel.

TADEO. Doesn't she?

TOBIAS. No.

TADEO. Very well, then, if she doesn't love him—

TOBIAS. What then? . . .

TADEO. We'll wait until she does.

TOBIAS. She'll never love him. Never!

TADEO. All the worse for you, then—and for Inda!

TOBIAS. Don Tadeo, I don't understand your intentions toward Inda very well, but I tell you that I have plenty of courage to protect her, and if I am thrown over the cliff like that mulèteer, Leon will revenge me,

Digitized by Google

TADEO. Revenge you! Ha! [*Laughs.*]

TOBIAS. Zoila is right. We have a great deal of bad luck coming to us yet. Everything that happens here seems to come from the devil.

TADEO. When the devil sticks his tail into things he always has some reason for it. All right, when you get through with your carving, start the fire. Leon has already gone for the wood. And let the devil alone, Tobias, for he's not such a bad chap to those who understand him well.

[*Laughs and goes out at the right.*

TOBIAS. Tiger!... Wretch! Curse you!... Curse you!

Enter INDA *with corn-husk cigarettes*

INDA. Where is Leon? Have you seen him?

TOBIAS. He went for some wood. What did you want?

INDA. Nothing. [*A short pause*] Where is Daniel?

TOBIAS. He's probably inside.

INDA. Where are you going?

TOBIAS. To look for a spit.

INDA. Here. [*Hands him some cigarettes.*

TOBIAS. Thanks, my child.

[*Lights one with his tinder and goes off up stage to the left.*

INDA. [*Glancing about her and approaching the door on the right*] Daniel, here are the cigarettes.

DANIEL. [*Off stage*] Come in!

INDA. I don't wish to. I'll leave them on the table.

[*Runs to the left of the stage.*

DANIEL. [*Entering*] You're afraid of me and you love me at the same time.

INDA. I, love you?

DANIEL. Yes, me!

INDA. If love is anything like hate, it may be so.

DANIEL. Last night when you thought I was asleep you came into my room and watched me for a while.

INDA. I? You lie! You lie!

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. This morning when I was saddling up you came over and hid behind the carob tree.

INDA. You lie! I didn't come for you. I was looking for something and I hid to keep you from looking at me with those terrible eyes of yours that follow me everywhere. Love you? I hate you! I hate you!

DANIEL. When I came back this morning you were standing over there looking in the direction I had gone, and when you saw me coming you ran into the house. If that is the way you hate me, hate me forever, my dear.

[He has been moving toward her. Now he takes her hand. INDA *resists less and less.*

INDA. Let me go! Don't touch me! Your touch burns me; your hands are afire!

DANIEL. [*Overpowering her*] Can't you see that you love me! That you are mine, mine?

INDA. [*Weakly*] No! You lie! Let me go. . . . Let me go!

DANIEL. You're afraid of me; you're trembling!

INDA. [*Undergoing a reaction, and tearing herself forcibly from his grasp*] I'll kill you! Let me go . . . curse you! I'll see you dead first . . . torn to pieces and eaten by vultures!

DANIEL. I'll tame you till you come and throw yourself at my feet. You'll follow me like a dog, and you'll come back to me whining for a caress. . . .

INDA. Never, never, never!

DANIEL. Poor Inda! You don't know me! Poor Inda! [*Starts to go out. In spite of herself, as if dominated by a superior will,* INDA *takes two or three steps in his direction*] Where are you going? Why do you follow me?

INDA. [*Stopping in surprise*] I . . .

DANIEL. Poor Inda! [*Goes out at right, laughing.*

INDA. [*Weeping disconsolately*] Father! Father!

[LEON *enters from up stage, sees* INDA, *drops his wood and runs to her side.*

Digitized by Google

LEON. Inda! What's the matter?

INDA. Leon! Take me away from here . . . let's go away forever. These rocks are accursed.

LEON. But what is the matter with you? Who made you cry?

INDA. Let's run away, Leon, before we are any worse off.

LEON. Run away? Very well, Inda, but not now.

INDA. Yes, now, Leon; this minute. Why do you want to stay here?

LEON. Why? To find out something, Inda.

INDA. Who from? [*Fearing for* DANIEL.]

LEON. My father.

INDA. Let your father alone, Leon, let him alone. Don Tadeo is very wicked. He's to blame more than anybody else for all these things.

LEON. That's just why I want to stay. That—and something else. If it were true!

INDA. Let's go away, Leon. . . . He'll kill you. . . . You don't know him.

LEON. He, kill me? [*Transition*] No, Inda, he couldn't kill me. His eyes are what I'm afraid of. . . . When he looks at me he paralyzes and disarms me. But there must be some way out, and then . .

INDA. Leon, I'm afraid! I'm afraid!

LEON. Of whom?

INDA. If you love me so much, take me away from here . . . take me away from all these rocks . . . don't leave me here, Leon. . . .

LEON. But what is troubling you?

INDA. Bad luck! Bad luck! It isn't my fault. . . . If you have something to do, come back alone and do it; let me stay far away from here, where I shall never see these cabins, never . . .

LEON. It's Daniel! Does he still annoy you? Answer me!

Digitized by Google

INDA. I love *you*, Leon . . .

LEON. Does he? Answer . . .

INDA. Yes.

LEON. [*Resolutely*] Very well; he won't do it any more!

INDA. No! I lied . . . it isn't so . . . it isn't Daniel . . .

LEON. Who? Who?

INDA. Oh, I don't know. I don't know, Leon. . . . Have pity on me . . .

LEON. Very well, Inda, I'll take you out of here tonight. I'll hide you somewhere on the sierra . . . but I shall come back! I shall come back . . .

INDA. Leon! My Leon! You have taken a great load off my heart. You have saved me, Leon, saved me . . . I'm not afraid any more.

[*During the foregoing,* JUAN DE DIOS *has been lurking about the stage, listening.*

JUAN DE DIOS. Why do you deceive him?

LEON AND INDA. What?

JUAN DE DIOS. You don't love Leon.

LEON. What did you say?

INDA. He lies! He lies!

JUAN DE DIOS. I spoke the truth. She was here a little while ago with the other . . . in this very spot.

LEON. Inda, is this true?

INDA. He lies, Leon . . . don't pay any attention to him.

LEON. Who saw it?

JUAN DE DIOS. I did, myself.

LEON. Was she with Daniel?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

INDA. Don't believe him, Leon.

LEON. Were you here with Daniel? Answer me!

INDA. Leon, I am most unhappy . . . take pity on me . . . it isn't my fault . . . he follows me, overpowers me with his will. . . . I want to hate him, I *do* hate him, Leon. . . . I'd kill him

Digitized by Google

gladly. . . . I don't know what he does to madden me the way he does . . . that's why I begged you to take me away, never to see him again, to love you and only you, so he can't cast the evil spell of his love over me.

LEON. Poor Inda, of course I understand . . . it isn't your fault, it's Father's. Thanks, my friend, for the warning. I'll take Inda away tonight.

JUAN DE DIOS. You're going to take her away?

LEON. Why shouldn't I? Isn't she mine?

JUAN DE DIOS. [*After a short pause*] Where are you going to take her?

LEON. To some spot on the sierra where no tiger can follow us.

JUAN DE DIOS. Daniel knows the sierra as well as you do. He'll look for her until he finds her even if you conceal her in the bowels of the mountain.

LEON. He'll have to reckon with me first, and then I shall do what I have never wished to do: kill. My blood is even now rising in a mist before my eyes. They hound me and threaten me like a cur. What shall I do? What shall I do? . . . Kill! . . . Kill!

JUAN DE DIOS. Leave Inda here . . . you can protect her better.

INDA. No, Leon; he doesn't want you to take me away because—

LEON. Why? Ah! Do you love her, too?

INDA. Yes, Leon; he, too.

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes, I love her . . . I love her more than any of you!

LEON. You? . . . You?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes, I . . . I!

LEON. Why did you lie to me? Don't you know that I could kill you right now . . . dash your head to pieces against that rock?

Digitized by Google

JUAN DE DIOS. Kill me! What do I care? You would be doing me a favor; I should suffer less. Life without her is worse than death. I have no one to weep for me, no one to miss me. All this love I have here was for her. If she is not to be mine, why should I want to live?

LEON. [*In admiration*] You love her as I do! [*A short pause*] Then why did you treat her and me so badly?

JUAN DE DIOS. For that very reason: because I love her. I cannot fight for her with physical strength as you can; so I fight with evil. Nobody matters to me . . . everything seems small in comparison to her.

LEON. And now, now that you have told the truth, will you be my friend?

JUAN DE DIOS. Now, less than ever. I can't be your friend when you love her, too, and seem stronger than I am.

LEON. What are you going to do then?

JUAN DE DIOS. Keep on loving her as long as there is hope for me.

LEON. Hope?

JUAN DE DIOS. Until either you or Daniel kill me.

LEON. [*After a short pause*] In that case, Inda, let's go away as soon as possible . . . right now!

JUAN DE DIOS. Go away? No!

LEON. Who is going to stop me?

JUAN DE DIOS. Don Tadeo!

LEON. My father?

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes. [*Calling*] Don Tadeo! Don Tadeo!

Enter DON TADEO

TADEO. Who called me?

JUAN DE DIOS. Leon is trying to take Inda away with him.

TADEO. What?

[JUAN DE DIOS *goes out, up stage, to the left, watching the scene as he goes.*

Digitized by Google

LEON. I want to take Inda away.

TADEO. You want to steal her from us?

LEON. I'm not stealing her . . . she is coming with me of her own free will.

TADEO. We need Inda here.

LEON. I need her more.

TADEO. See here; neither one of you is going to leave!

LEON. She loves me, Father; she wants to go away with me!

TADEO. If she loves you, she shall go with you, but only when I say so, and when I feel like it.

LEON. [*In a high voice, dramatically, almost shouting*] Father! I don't want to have to fight you!

TADEO. Fight me? . . . You? Stand up to me! [*Transition*] I don't want to kill you now. I've got something better in store for you . . . [*Laughs*] something to remember me by . . . so you'll remember me always. [*To* INDA] Go into the house, you. [*Pause*] They tell me that you have seen your mother. Answer me . . .

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. When?

LEON. Early this morning.

TADEO. On Alto Grande? [*Crescendo.*]

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. Was she hovering over the point of rock?

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. Did she look very tall and very white?

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. With a cloak that reached to her feet?

LEON. Yes. [*A short pause.*

TADEO. [*Laughing*] I wonder why we have both seen her in the same way?

LEON. Perhaps we were both thinking hard about the same thing. I, because I am her son. You . . . you alone know why . . .

Digitized by Google

TADEO. [*Laughing*] I know why. . . . That's right! [*Crossing to the cook-house*] Zoila, get the aloja ready and bring it out here. I know why! . . . That's good!

Enter TOBIAS *with a spit*

TADEO. Are you going to roast it soon?

TOBIAS. Yes.

TADEO. Will there be enough for everybody?

TOBIAS. If they're not too hungry.

[*Goes out, up stage, to the right.*

TADEO. I know why! And so will you! . . . Fight me! That's good! [*Goes out, up stage, to the left.*

[LEON *sits upon a rock lost in thought, and very downcast. The afternoon wanes. Soon* PIQUILLIN'S *flute is heard approaching.*

PIQUILLIN. [*Off stage*] Head off the goats! Open the corral gate!

[LEON *gets up, goes off, up stage, to the left to do as indicated.* ZOILA *brings a huge jar of aloja from the cook-house. She sets the table with glasses and cups of different shapes and sizes.*

TOBIAS. [*Off stage*] Here comes Lupipa with her daughters!

ZOILA. My old friend! Inda, go and meet them. [*Up stage*] Get right down, my friend. [*Goes out at right.*

Enter DON TADEO *and* DANIEL

DANIEL. It looks as if the guests were arriving.

Enter ZOILA *with* LUPIPA *and her two daughters*

LUPIPA. Good afternoon. [*Words of greeting, etc.*]

TADEO. How are you, Lupipa? And you, girls?

LUPIPA. Not very well. . . . We left Policarpo in bed . . . it looks like the palsy.

ZOILA. I'll give you something to cure it, my friend.

LUPIPA. Thanks.

TADEO. Bring out some seats, Zoila. You help her, Inda.

[*They bring out chairs, horsehide seats, sections of trees, etc.*

Digitized by Google

TOBIAS. [*Off stage*] Don Tadeo, here comes Pastor, the blind man, with the musicians.

ALL. The musicians! [*They go up stage.*

TADEO. [*To* DANIEL] Help them get their instruments down. [*Exit* DANIEL] Tell them to dismount under the tree.

VOICE OF THE BLIND MAN. *Ave Maria Purisima!*

ZOILA. Conceived without sin.

Enter JUAN DE DIOS, *up stage, on the left*

TADEO. Come right down. [*Enter the musicians.* DANIEL *carries the harp*] While we're waiting for the sheep to roast, we'll step about a bit. Well, how about it? Did you have much trouble carrying your instruments?

RUPERTO. So-so. We had to carry the harp on top. The passes are pretty narrow; you can hardly get through.

Enter LEON

DANIEL. Here come some more guests. [*All look off at right.*

TADEO. Who are they?

ZOILA. I can't see them very well.

LUPIPA. There are two of them.

TADEO. Three; there comes the other.

DANIEL. The one in the middle looks like Señor Doroteo.

TADEO. Yes, it is—it's my old friend. But, hasn't he been sick?

DANIEL. Who is the one ahead?

TADEO. I don't know him. It might be a good idea to receive my friend with music. If you're not too tired you might play us a little piece. [*Music.*

TOBIAS. [*Off stage*] Good afternoon.

DANIEL. They're not stopping.

[*An individual mounted on a mule crosses the stage from right to left. Soon, when the dialogue indicates it, an old man crosses in the same manner.*

TADEO. Get down, my friend, here's the dance. [*A short pause*] He doesn't answer.

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. Friend! Listen, my friend! . . .

TADEO. Here comes my old comrade. Where are you going, comrade? Dismount, then. [*A short pause*] Aren't you coming to the dance? [*A short pause*] What's the matter with you? Why don't you answer me?

DANIEL. Señor Camposanto!

TADEO. [*Removes his hat. The others follow his example. At the same moment the music stops*] They're dead!

CAMPOSANTO. [*Laughing*] Why, didn't you recognize them? The one ahead is Nabor, Señor Deidamía's son, who died night before last. The other is Señor Doroteo. He took two days to die, and I had to wait for him until this morning. I'm taking them down below to bury them in consecrated ground . . . otherwise their souls would stay in torment.

TADEO. My poor friend!

CAMPOSANTO. Won't you ask me to have a drink?

TADEO. Bring him one. [INDA *serves him*] You never come this way any more, so we didn't recognize you.

CAMPOSANTO. That's right. I'm not going around by the other road, which is longer, today, because Señor Doroteo is already half gone. The other is fresher, even if he did die two days ago. He stands more because he's younger. We old men are good for nothing: we won't even wait for them to bury us. [*Drinks*] That's very good . . . may God repay you. Well, good-by, and have a good time.

ZOILA. Señor Camposanto, don't forget to bring me that!

CAMPOSANTO. All right, Zoila; don't worry. [*Clucking to his mules*] Get up, mules! [*Goes out, up stage, to the left.*

TADEO. The old devil! Well, make yourselves comfortable, and begin the dance. Take your seats. Serve them, Zoila; it will put a little heart in them. They're all pulling long faces. Open up, now. [*To* JUAN DE DIOS] And you, my lad; here you have two pretty girls—choose the one you like best.

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. [*Who has brought in a jar of specially prepared aloja. To* INDA] Drink!

INDA. Thanks, but I don't feel well.

DANIEL. Do you scorn me? Drink! [INDA *does so*] Drink it all! [INDA *finishes it*]

LEON. Do you want to dance with me, Inda?

DANIEL. You're too late; Inda has already promised me.

LEON. You lie! Inda dances with nobody but me!

DANIEL. Who are you to order me about?

LEON. I don't want her to dance with you!

TADEO. Inda dances with any one she wants to. That's what she's here for.

LEON. I'll not have it!

TADEO. You won't? Sit down, I tell you.

LEON. Father!

TADEO. Sit down, I tell you, if you don't want me to break your head open with a chair! Begin the dance!

[*The music begins. They dance.* LEON *falls staggering into a chair. His nails are pressed into his flesh.*

LEON. [*In a low voice*] I can do nothing! He has mastered me!

JUAN DE DIOS. [*Disdainfully*] Where's your spirit? If I had your strength!

[*When the dance ends,* INDA *feels ill.*

INDA. I can't . . . I'm used up. [*To* DANIEL] What did you give me to drink? Brute!

[*Goes into her cabin at left.* DANIEL *laughs meaningly.* TADEO *watches them maliciously.*

TADEO. Serve them, Zoila. Let's see if we can't cheer them up a bit. Give some to the musicians; their tongues must be dry.

DANIEL. Watch me, Father!

[*Taking advantage of the moment's confusion, he cautiously enters* INDA'S *cabin and closes the door.* DON

Digitized by Google

TADEO laughs with a malice and content that he cannot conceal.

TADEO. That's my way! Well played! [*Aloud*] Well, let's have the next one, for there's no first without a second. Why don't you dance, Leon?

ALL. Yes, yes—let Leon dance . . .

[LEON lifts his head, looks about him for INDA and, when he fails to see her, jumps to his feet with a shout.

LEON. Inda! Inda! Where is Inda?

TADEO. [*Pointing up stage*] She went down that way.

LEON. [*Frantic, savage, he runs up stage like a wounded lion*] Inda! Inda! Inda!

TADEO. [*Dominating the scene and especially JUAN DE DIOS, who seems to fear him*] On with the dance! On with the dance! [*With a gesture of pride, he laughs as if satisfied. The music starts*] Just like me! Fine boy! My way! My way!

LEON. [*From the mountainside, wildly shouting*] Inda! . . . Inda! Inda! . . .

Curtain

Digitized by Google

ACT THREE

The night of the same day. clear and starlit. In the center, a spit with the remnants of the roast. About it are seated DON TADEO, INDA, *and* PIQUILLIN. ZOILA *is seated in the center, facing the public. She is smoking a corn-husk cigarette.* LEON *is somewhat apart from the others. He is profoundly dejected.*

ZOILA. Well, they say that he was so bad and that everybody hated him so that he always went about alone, like a soul in torment. Once when he was climbing among the mountain crags he met a little man in a great big hat. As it was a very dark night, he could not see the little man's face very clearly, but he could see sparks coming out of his eyes. It was the devil himself! "What's the matter with you?" the devil said. "Why do you always go about so sorrowfully as if you were running away from people? What is the greatest desire you have in your life? Would you like to be a tiger and slay cows and sheep and feed on their entrails, with no man or beast able to do you harm? What would you like?" And the bad man answered, "I'd like to be strong, stronger than all men; to have the power of conquering any woman by just looking at her, and to marry the one I love even if she hates me." "Very well," said the devil, "everything you see, be it animal, woman, or man, shall do your bidding. If you tell them to die, they shall die; but you must give me your soul in exchange." "When must I give you my soul?" asked the bad man. "So long as your eyes can see, I shall let you have your soul; but as soon as

Digitized by Google

they lose their sight, you will lose the power I gave you and you must give me your soul," the devil replied. "Very well, I agree," said the bad man. Then the devil disappeared in a puff of smoke that smelt of burnt sulphur. And thus it was: The bad man married a very good woman. This woman was the only thing the man loved in the world, but he loved her so much that he was jealous of the very air she breathed. And because the devil had given him no power over jealousy, the bad man lived in torment day and night until at length, to put an end to his sufferings, he decided to kill her. "When my wife is dead," he said to himself, "I won't be jealous of anybody, and so I won't suffer any more." Then it was that he made use of the power that the devil had given him, and the good woman died. That night the devil himself helped the bad man to watch over her. They say that the room where the body lay was as bright as day from the light that came out of the devil's eyes. After that night the man never spoke to a soul; he was always alone, with the devil by his side. They say that alongside of the bad man's footsteps there was always a track like that of a wild pig. The man could do nothing in this company. Sometimes he was seen to fight some one that only he could see. If he was in his room he would feel the door open and shut as if some one had entered; if he was sitting thinking hard an invisible being would come and stand beside him. Once we were all seated in a circle, as we are now, when suddenly he felt a breath on his back, and—

TADEO. What's that!

[They all jump to their feet instantly, as if they had heard a noise behind them. A moment of waiting.

ZOILA. It's the cat scratching the door. I left him shut up in the cook-house. Plague take the cat, he didn't frighten me!

TADEO. All right. How does the story end?

Digitized by Google

ZOILA. One night the devil asked the bad man if he was happy. "No," he replied. "I want to forget, now." "There is only one way to forget," said the devil, "and that is to die. Give me your soul and then you'll forget." "Very well," answered the bad man. "All your gift did for me was to make me kill what I loved most. Why should I want it any longer?" They say that that very same night the bad man fell off a cliff while following the phantom of a woman in white across the sierra, and that a huge black condor came down out of the clouds and pecked his eyes out. . . . And now, somebody else tell one!

TADEO. That will do; that's enough of your foolishness!

ZOILA. You don't seem to like my story?

TADEO. You're always dabbling in witchcraft. Take care that the devil doesn't carry you off one of these nights.

ZOILA. Maybe. [*Meaningly*] He comes around here a good deal.

TADEO. All right; take that into the cook-house. [*Indicating the spit*] You old witch! [ZOILA *goes into the cook-house with a witchlike smile*] You, Piquillín, go to bed, for you've got to get up early. Take care that the goats don't get away from you as they did last night. I'm going for a stroll to take a look at the stone wall.

[PIQUILLIN *and* DON TADEO *go out, up stage, to the left.*

INDA. [*In a low voice to* DANIEL, *who starts to go out at left*] Listen, Daniel!

DANIEL. There he is. [*Indicating* LEON] Go and tell him all about it. [*Goes out at right with a sarcastic smile.*

INDA. You brute! [*Goes out at left.*

LEON. [*After a long pause*] Don't you suspect anything, old man?

TOBIAS. No. What do you mean?

LEON. I don't know; I'm very unhappy and very angry.

TOBIAS. What do you suspect?

Digitized by Google

LEON. Everything. Inda, above all.

TOBIAS. Inda?

LEON. Yes. It looks as if she didn't love me any more.

TOBIAS. What has she done to make you say that?

LEON. I don't know. She hasn't been the same since last night. I don't know what's the matter with her or why she has changed. But she is like a different person. . . . Inda doesn't love me any more.

TOBIAS. What did she tell you? Haven't you asked her?

LEON. Yes; but she didn't want to answer me. I spoke to her about our little affairs and she began to cry. And she went off crying without saying a word to me. [*Short pause*] It seems to me that my father has something to do with it . . . but I'm changed, too, now—nobody will recognize me. I've come to the end of my rope; I've got to kill; I want blood, blood that will stain me . . .

TOBIAS. Leon! Leon! My son! . . .

LEON. I'm not afraid of anybody now. My hands are looking for somebody. . . . [*Defiantly*] Where is the man who stole her love from me? Where is he? Is it Father, Daniel, or Juan de Dios? Who is it? Let him who can answer!

TOBIAS. Listen, Leon; Inda is yours; I have sworn it. Let me speak to her. She'll tell me what the matter is. I am sure that she loves you, Leon.

LEON. [*Changed, with great tenderness*] Old man, you are good. Speak to her, tell her that for her sake I'll be a dog, that her love is the breath of life to me, that I'll suffer anything for her sake, that I'll be good and patient . . . but tell her to come with me, to run away with me . . . and not to leave me for some one else, for in that case . . .

TOBIAS. All right, my son; calm yourself; leave it to me . . .

LEON. There she is, old man; call her . . . call her . . .

[*Goes out, up stage, at the left.*

TOBIAS. Inda.

Digitized by Google

INDA. [*Enters*] What is it, Father?

TOBIAS. Inda, my child, what ails you? Why are you like this?

INDA. Father, I am very wicked.

TOBIAS. Why do you say that?

INDA. Why? . . . I hardly know myself.

TOBIAS. Tell me, Inda, and think well on what you are going to say. Don't you love Leon any more?

INDA. No, Father, I do not.

TOBIAS. Inda! Inda!

INDA. I told you I was wicked and that there was no hope for me.

TOBIAS. Who has bewitched you, unhappy girl? Who do you love now?

INDA. Another man; he may be very wicked, but I love him. I love him with a love I never knew before, with a mixture of hatred and pain.

TOBIAS. Unhappy girl, that man is Daniel!

INDA. Yes, Father, it is Daniel! Curse him!

TOBIAS. [*Calling*] Leon! Leon!

INDA. [*Restraining him*] Father! Don't call him. I don't want you to kill the other . . .

TOBIAS. Let me go . . . let me go, wretched girl!

INDA. No, Father, kill me if you wish, but not him . . .

TOBIAS. You defend him?

INDA. Forgive me, Father; I am lost, powerless in his love. . . . Forgive me for this sin, Father dear. . . .

TOBIAS. Unhappy child! I knew it! He has bewitched you!

INDA. Ask anything you wish of me, but don't tell Leon. I don't want him to know a thing about it. . . . I'll do anything you say, Father.

TOBIAS. Listen to me, Inda: you are going away with Leon this very night.

Digitized by Google

INDA. With Leon! Tonight?

TOBIAS. Yes, tonight.... He'll find some place to hide you; tomorrow you'll go down below, and we'll find some place to live. Once far away from here where you can't see Daniel, you will love Leon again, because you have always loved him, Inda.

INDA. I don't know now, Father; this love isn't the same I felt for Leon. That was a good love; it didn't trouble me and make me cry.

TOBIAS. Very well, be a good child, and some day we won't be so unhappy. Now do what your father tells you.

[*Goes out, up stage, at the left.* INDA *sits down. Then she gets up resolutely and looks about her as if anxiously seeking some one.* JUAN DE DIOS *surprises her.*

JUAN DE DIOS. You surely aren't looking for me?

INDA. [*Surprised*] You!

JUAN DE DIOS. Are you frightened? Think of me frightening you!

INDA. I haven't seen you all day, so I thought you had gone.

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes, I have been away ever since last night.

INDA. Since last night!

JUAN DE DIOS. After the dance! After you . . . disappeared from the dance . . .

INDA. Ah! You know! . . .

JUAN DE DIOS. Yes.

INDA. [*Pleadingly*] Juan de Dios!

JUAN DE DIOS. Have no fear; no one but you, the other, and I know; and I'll say nothing. Why should I? Why should I? [*Sits down. A short pause.*]

INDA. Where have you been?

JUAN DE DIOS. I went over to the pond where I sat down

Digitized by Google

on the bank and watched the water. It was so green and beautiful! [*A short pause*] They say that nobody has ever found the bottom. Is that true?

INDA. [*Absently*] So I've heard.

JUAN DE DIOS. And that sometimes, on still, clear nights, one can hear a sad song like a plaintive wail that comes out of the pond.

INDA. I have heard the same thing. They say it's the cacuy.[1] . . . [*Pause.*

JUAN DE DIOS. I wonder what can be in there? [*A painful silence. He shrugs his shoulders and gets up*] Well, good-by!

INDA. Are you leaving?

JUAN DE DIOS. No; I've already told you that I shall never leave, that I shall never travel any more, that I have found what I was looking for here.

INDA. Then, are you staying?

JUAN DE DIOS. No, not that, either. What I was looking for is dead to me, so why should I stay? You have been another's. It's as if you were dead as far as I am concerned.

[*Coldly, leisurely, he starts to go, humming a little song.*

INDA. Juan de Dios!

JUAN DE DIOS. What is it?

INDA. [*Holding out her hand*] My hand!

JUAN DE DIOS. What for?

INDA. So as not to separate like this.

JUAN DE DIOS. Well, after all . . .

Enter LEON

LEON. Inda!

JUAN DE DIOS. Are you jealous? Don't take it wrongly; I was saying good-by. . . .

LEON. Going? Where?

[1] Cacuy or kakué: a South American bird whose cry is so weird and heartrending that the natives believe it is the embodiment of human souls in torment.

Digitized by Google

JUAN DE DIOS. I don't know. . . . I don't believe any one knows.

LEON. Well, good-by, then, and good luck . . .

JUAN DE DIOS. Good-by . . . may you be happy—if you can. [*Goes out slowly, up stage, to the right.*

LEON. Inda, your father just told me that you will go with me tonight. Is that true?

INDA. [*Weakly*] Yes, Leon.

LEON. Then you still love me? Nobody has taken your love from me? Are you still the same? Let me hear your voice. You make me suspicious when you act like this. . . . Speak!

INDA. Yes, Leon; I love you.

LEON. At last we are going away from here, Inda! I was afraid of these rocks . . . I felt as if they were about to crush me. How unhappy I was when I couldn't find you at the dance last night! I ran off in despair, thinking that some one had stolen you! Inda, you don't know how far I went over these mountains. When I got back I was half dead; but then I saw you and felt better and happier than ever before. As I couldn't tell you so before so many people, I took out that little handkerchief you gave me and went into a corner of the dormitory, where no one could see me, and kissed it.

INDA. [*Weeping*] Leon, why didn't we go away sooner?

LEON. Don't cry, Inda; we're going away tonight whether Father likes it or not. I'm losing my fear of him, Inda, I'm losing my fear of him. [*Almost as if talking to his father, very solemnly*] But I shall come back after I have left you in a safe place . . . to settle accounts with my father, and also . . . for something else. Zoila has told me many things! The bad man of the story . . . the bad man. . . . Poor Mother! I have given my oath to her! [*Short pause*] Well, Inda, we are going away. We'll be happy anywhere once we get away

Digitized by Google

from these rocks. Wait a minute, I have a surprise for you. [*Goes into the dormitory and returns with a bundle*] Here!

INDA. What is it?

LEON. Untie it.

INDA. A dress!

LEON. Yes, a calico dress. I had it sent up from down below. And also the handkerchief; it's silk. Look at it!

INDA. How good you are, Leon!

LEON. Sometimes. Now run along, Inda, and get ready. Make a bundle of what you are going to carry. I'm going to get one of my goats, for there is nothing to eat where we are going. Wait for me, I'll be back soon. [*Up stage, facing the mountains*] At last! At last! If I could only overturn all these rocks . . . set fire to all these hateful cabins . . . not even leave a wisp of straw or a blade of grass . . . put an end to all this wicked place . . . and only leave ashes, ashes, ashes! . . .

INDA. [*As* LEON *goes out she moves rapidly toward the right*] Daniel! Daniel!

DANIEL. What do you want?

INDA. Leon wants to carry me off now. . . . Let's run away before he comes back!

DANIEL. Run away? What for?

INDA. He and Father want me to go away tonight.

DANIEL. But you're not going to go even if they want you to. You love me and nobody can take you from me!

INDA. Leon will kill you! Let's run away, Daniel. You who have treated me so badly, be good to me now; come with me, don't stay here, he'll kill you . . .

DANIEL. I sha'n't move from here. Let him kill me if he has the courage!

INDA. Then you don't love me. You've deceived me!

DANIEL. I told you that my love was going to cost you a great many tears. . . .

Digitized by Google

INDA. Brute! You always were inhuman! Leon is coming back soon. What shall I do?

DANIEL. [*Cynically*] Go away with him!

INDA. Deceive him? No, I don't want to! Ah, I'm so unhappy! [*Weeps.*]

Enter DON TADEO

TADEO. Daniel, you're going away with Inda immediately.

DANIEL. What did you say, Father?

TADEO. You are going at once! I've just been over on the stone wall, and I saw Leon . . .

DANIEL. What of it? Who's afraid of him?

TADEO. I don't know what it was I saw in his face!

DANIEL. You, Father? You—afraid of another man?

TADEO. I've never known what it is to be afraid! Can Leon be of my blood? Because only a man of my— [*Suddenly*] Go, take all the silver, go! . . .

DANIEL. Father!

TADEO. Go, my son; leave me.

INDA. Yes, Daniel; let's go before he gets back.

DANIEL. If you order me to, Father, I'll go . . . I'm not afraid!

TADEO. Yes, I order you to, my son. . . . Go! Go! [*Removes his leather hunting belt and hands it to his son*] Here, take this!

DANIEL. Well, as long as you order me to. Good-by, Father.

TADEO. Good-by, my son, good-by!

[DON TADEO *goes into his room.* DANIEL *and* INDA *start to go out, up stage, to the right. They meet* TOBIAS *as he enters.*

TOBIAS. Where are you going, wicked girl? Go into the house!

INDA. [*Surprised*] Father!

TOBIAS. Go into the house!

Digitized by Google

DANIEL. She's going with me, and I'm taking her away!

TOBIAS. No! No, you're not! Go into the house!

DANIEL. Let go of her, old man; I don't want to hurt you!

[*They struggle.*

TOBIAS. Bandit!

DANIEL. Let go, old man!

TOBIAS. Leon! Leon!

INDA. What for, Father? Why deceive him? I don't love him. I have been with Daniel. He is my man. Let me go.

[*They go out, up stage, to the right.* TOBIAS *enters his room.*

TOBIAS. Wretch! You'll have to kill me first! You sha'n't go! No! Leon! Leon!

[DON TADEO *comes out as* TOBIAS *gives a piercing cry of grief.* DON TADEO *follows the fugitives anxiously with his eyes. Enter* LEON *at left.*

LEON. Who is calling me?

TADEO. [*Surprised, coldly*] I, I called you.

LEON. You! What for?

TADEO. You wanted to run away with Inda, didn't you?

LEON. Yes.

TADEO. Well, you can take her now.

LEON. I was just going to. Inda is waiting for me. But I want to tell you something first.

TADEO. What is it?

LEON. That I'm coming back!

TADEO. For your goats?

LEON. For them . . . and something else!

TADEO. What?

LEON. I want to know why my mother appeared to me.

TADEO. Your mother! Ah!

LEON. Yes, my mother! My mother! And whether all they say is true!

Digitized by Google

TADEO. Ah! You wanted to come back for that?

LEON. Yes!

TADEO. You're going to find out right now. Did they tell you that I was very cruel to her, that I was very jealous, that I made her suffer very much?

LEON. Yes, yes!

TADEO. That I accused her of being unfaithful to me, out of revenge, with a muleteer who spent the night here?

LEON. Yes, yes!

TADEO. That that night just at daybreak I made old Tobias lead him on some pretext or other to the Alto Grande cliff, and that then, from where I was hidden behind a rock, I gave him a push and threw him over the cliff?

LEON. Ah!

TADEO. And that after that I tied your mother to a chair and made her sleep in the open on the roughest winter nights?

LEON. Ah!

TADEO. And that one night they found your mother dead, frozen white, and covered with snow? Is that what they told you?

LEON. Well? Is it true? Did you do that to my mother?

TADEO. Ah! [*Laughs.*]

LEON. [*Savagely*] Answer me! Answer me!

TADEO. Yes! I killed her! I killed her! She deceived me!

LEON. You lie!

TADEO. She deceived me! She was the only one I loved! That's why I killed her!

LEON. Bad man! Vile man!

TADEO. But she died too soon! I didn't know that one could die so easily. That's why you lived! Don't you understand that I could have strangled you, that I could have torn you to pieces at birth? But I didn't want to; I promised your mother that you should live. Yes, I needed your life, your body, your blood for my vengeance! For twenty

Digitized by Google

years I have detested you, suffered you; I have not lived, have not slept, I have had horrible nightmares, and phantoms and devils dog my footsteps! For twenty years you have tormented me by your presence, by the memory of her whom I loved as no other man ever loved a woman! Now that you know, now that your life is poisoned forever as mine has been, now that you can never laugh again . . . you may go; I am content. You have paid me for all I have suffered! Go! Go!

LEON. No, not yet! I don't wish to!

TADEO. Leave this place! Go!

LEON. I don't wish to go! Now it is my turn to master you!

TADEO. Me? Neither you nor anybody else can do that!

LEON. You tiger, you! May the devil take you! Curse you!

[TADEO *starts to throw himself upon* LEON, *whom he wishes once more to master.*

LEON. [*Removes his poncho and hurls it in his face*] Now indeed!

TADEO. [*With the poncho over his head, holding out his arms as if the truth were suddenly revealed to him*] Leon! You are my son! My son!

LEON. [*Falls upon his father with a sudden leap. There is a short struggle until he succeeds in striking his father's head against a rock again and again*] Now you are mastered! Forever! Forever! Ha! Ha! Ha! [*Runs up stage. Comes back and stands silent, paralyzed with terror.* DON TADEO'S *body, which has slipped from the rock, gazes at* LEON *with open eyes. After a pause he approaches the body and turns it over with his foot in superstitious terror*] Even after death you still wish to master me!

[*With his back up stage, he confronts the body in fear.*

DANIEL'S VOICE. [*Off stage*] Ha! Ha! Ha!

Digitized by Google

[*Far off on the mountainside one sees* DANIEL *with* INDA *in his arms.* LEON *turns around and roars savagely when he sees them.*

LEON. He's carrying her off! She's going with him! No, they sha'n't take her away from me! [*Calling*] Inda! Inda! [*Dejectedly*] But why? She doesn't love me! She never loved me! [*Complete surrender. He weeps bitterly. Then he becomes somber, mute, tragic, vacant. At last, with a mental upset that degenerates into utter madness in his last words*] Father! Father! [*The flapping of the wings of a passing condor is heard.* LEON *follows it with his eyes. Then, standing erect upon a rock*] Father! I am the condor! I am the condor! I am the condor! . . .

Curtain

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX A

Notes

The following Notes consist of excerpts from *The Literary History of Spanish America*, written by Alfred Coester and published by The MacMillan Company. This book covers so wide a field that it cannot give more than a rather brief sketch of the literature of each country, but as a sympathetic and understanding study, and as a piece of research in a virgin territory, so far as the Anglo-Saxon is concerned, the work is invaluable. I have utilized the material contained in the chapter entitled "Argentina."—Ed.

Note A

"Coronado, on the other hand, essayed the drama in productions the most important since those of Marmol. *La Rosa Blanca*, 1877, dramatizes the efforts of a physician to cure a girl who had become insane through disappointed love. *Luz de Luna y Luz de Incendio*, played a year later, stages with great realism the days of Rosas. *Cuitino*, a despicable villain and an officer of the tyrant, appears at an evening party, where he succeeds in getting his victim, young *Emilio*, to betray his unitarian sentiments, whereat he is arrested and taken to the barracks of the Federal soldiers. The scene at the barracks gives opportunity for declamatory eloquence from *Emilio*. The drunken *Cuitino* and his soldiers display the utmost brutality and thereby prepare the spectator for the killings in the last act.

Digitized by Google

"These plays were partly the outcome of the efforts of a literary society, the 'Academía Argentina,' to promote the theater. The members proclaimed themselves disciples of Echeverría, with the purpose of nationalizing literature on the model of *La Cautiva*."

Note B

"But Eduardo Gutiérrez, by adapting one of the episodes of his novel, *Juan Moreira*, to pantomimic representation in a circus, opened another path in literature to the gaucho. At first to fill the part in the pantomime real gauchos rode their horses into the circus and strummed the guitar. Soon spoken dialogue was added to their rôles. In this play the brothers Podestá achieved a reputation and continued it independent of the circus. Their success encouraged them to stage *Martín Fierro*. Then original plays about gauchos were written both in Argentina and in Uruguay. So to the present day the gaucho has kept the stage. And from this popular origin has developed a class of plays which represent the manners and speech of the lower classes."

Note C

"The first edition of *Fausto* distributed twenty thousand copies, the proceeds of which were donated to the military hospitals. But more popular still has been *Martín Fierro*, published in 1872, by José Hernandez (1834–86). The author was a journalist in Buenos Aires who founded the *Revista del Rio de la Plata*. The editions of his poem, nearly tripled in length by the addition of a second part, *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, are still issued. As a measure of its popularity may be taken the fact that it used to be on sale in country groceries, and the often quoted anecdote of the

Digitized by Google

messenger sent to buy various supplies, and 'the latest part of *Martín Fierro*.'

"The poem relates in the language and manner of the gaucho the story of *Martín Fierro's* misfortunes. Once a small farmer with wife and child, he was taken from them by a recruiting officer. The regiment into which he was drafted fights with the Indians. After a while he deserts and returns to his farm. He finds it without signs of life and the buildings burnt. So he becomes a *matrero*, or gaucho outlaw, in company with one Cruz. Tired of being hunted by the police, Martín smashes his guitar as a sign of renouncing his ties with the white race, and joins the Indians. *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro*, on his return to civilization, has less movement, and long moralizing sermons by Padre Vizcacha. These, however, were not displeasing to its readers who found their own sentiments voiced by his words. The generation who received this poem understood it as a challenge to the government in Buenos Aires that was legislating for the country people without understanding their needs."

Note D

"With less realism and more of the artistry demanded by Mitre, the gaucho next appeared in verse in the *Tradiciones Argentinas*, by Rafael Obligado. These three brief poems are poetical interpretations of the Santos Vega legend. In the first a payador relates how the ghost of Santos Vega had played at night on a guitar accidentally left by a well. The second brings the famous gaucho to a ghostly love tryst. The third narrates the death of Santos Vega in contest with an unknown payador, to whom Obligado gives the symbolic name, Juan Sin Ropa. According to the legend Santos Vega, the unexcelled, had succumbed only in a contest with the Devil; but this victor's name typifies the new immigration

Digitized by Google

which has brought about the passing of the old conditions in the country. In the words of the poem, Juan Sin Ropa's song 'was the mighty cry of progress on the wind.'"

Note E

"Though the officially printed collection of Sarmiento's writings fill fifty volumes, his literary fame is based on those already mentioned. The characteristics of his style, its swift movement, his ability to select the striking detail or apt anecdote, may be partly illustrated by the following extract from the description of Argentina in the first part of *Facundo*.[1] Moreover, no better introduction could be given to a study of the development of the most original of all Spanish-American poetry, that pertaining to the gaucho.

"'There is another poetry which echoes over the solitary plains, the popular, natural, and irregular poetry of the gaucho. In 1840 Echeverría, then a young man, lived some months in the country, where the fame of his verses upon the pampa had already preceded him; the gauchos surrounded him with respect and affection, and when a newcomer showed symptoms of the scorn he felt for the little minstrel, some one whispered, "He is a poet," and that word dispelled every prejudice.

"'It is well known that the guitar is the popular instrument of the Spanish race; it is also common in South America. The majo or troubadour is discoverable in the gaucho of the country, and in the townsman of the same class. The cielito, the dance of the pampas, is animated by the same

[1] *Facundo* was translated by Mrs. Horace Mann and published under the title of *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Time of Tyrants*, Boston, 1868. The volume also contains other extracts from Sarmiento's writings, especially from the *Recuerdos de Provincia*, dealing with his family.

Digitized by Google

spirit as the Spanish jaleo, the dance of Andalusia; the dancer makes castanets of his fingers; all his movements disclose the majo; the action of his shoulders, his gestures, all his ways, from that in which he puts on his hat to his style of spitting through his teeth, all are of the pure Andalusian type.

"'The name of gaucho outlaw is not applied wholly as an uncomplimentary epithet. The law has been for many years in pursuit of him. His name is dreaded, spoken under the breath, but not in hate, and almost respectfully. He is a mysterious personage; his abode is the pampa; his lodgings are the thistle fields; he lives on partridges and hedgehogs, and whenever he is disposed to regale himself upon a tongue, he lassoes a cow, throws her without assistance, kills her, takes his favorite morsel, and leaves the rest for the carrion birds. The gaucho outlaw will make his appearance in a place just left by soldiers, will talk in a friendly way with the admiring group of good gauchos around him; provide himself with tobacco, yerba mate, which makes a refreshing beverage, and if he discovers the soldiers, he mounts his horse quietly and directs his steps leisurely to the wilderness, not even deigning to look back. He is seldom pursued; that would be killing horses to no purpose, for the beast of the gaucho outlaw is a bay courser, as noted in his own way as his master. If he ever happens to fall unawares into the hands of the soldiers, he sets upon the densest masses of his assailants, and breaks through them, with the help of a few slashes left by his knife upon the faces or bodies of his opponents; and lying along the ridge of his horse's back to avoid the bullets sent after him, he hastens toward the wilderness, until, having left his pursuers at a convenient distance, he pulls up and travels at his ease. The poets of the vicinity add this new exploit to the biography of the desert hero, and his renown flies through all the vast

Digitized by Google

region around. Sometimes he appears before the scene of a rustic festival with a young woman whom he has carried off, and takes a place in the dance with his partner, goes through the figures of the cielito, and disappears, unnoticed. Another day be brings the girl he has seduced to the house of her offended family, sets her down from his horse's croup, and reckless of the parents' curses by which he is followed, quietly betakes himself to his boundless abode.

"'And now we have the idealization of this life of resistance, civilization, barbarism, and danger. The gaucho Cantor corresponds to the singer, bard, or troubadour of the Middle Ages. The Cantor has no fixed abode; he lodges where night surprises him; his fortune consists in his verses and in his voice. Wherever the wild mazes of the cielito are threaded, wherever there is a glass of wine to drink, the Cantor has his place and his particular part in the festival. The Argentine gaucho only drinks when excited by music and verse, and every grocery has its guitar ready for the hands of the Cantor who perceives from afar where the help of his "gay science" is needed, by the group of horses about the door.

"'The Cantor intersperses his heroic songs with the tale of his own exploits. Unluckily his profession of Argentine bard does not shield him from the law. He can tell of a couple of stabs he has dealt, of one or two "misfortunes" (homicides) of his, and of some horse or girl he carried off.

"'To conclude, the original poetry of the minstrel is clumsy, monotonous, and irregular, when he resigns himself to the inspiration of the moment. It is occupied rather with narration than with the expression of feeling, and is replete with imagery relating to the open country, to the horse, and to the scenes of the wilderness, which makes it metaphorical and grandiose. When he is describing his own exploits or those of some renowned evil-doer, he resembles the Neapolitan improvisatore, his style being unfettered, commonly prosaic,

Digitized by Google

but occasionally rising to the poetic level for some moments, to sink again into dull and scarcely metrical recitation. The Cantor possesses, moreover, a repertory of popular poems in octosyllabic lines variously combined into stanzas of five lines, of ten, or of eight. Among them are many compositions of merit which show some inspiration and feeling.'

"The character whom Sarmiento terms a 'cantor' was more popularly known in Buenos Aires as a 'payador,' a name derived from the verb 'payar' meaning to improvise in verse to the accompaniment of the guitar. As Sarmiento intimates, the popular poetry of Argentina is a derivative of the Andalusian of the Middle Ages and has a long popular development. The episodes related by the payador reveal a certain epic quality tinged with Moorish sadness, but tempered by the Andalusian keenness for the satirical and the comic. Frequent also is the intent to teach a moral lesson; barbarous at times, for the purpose often is to inculcate a spirit of rebellion."

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX B

The following extracts have been reprinted from the versions of *Juan Moreira* and *Santos Vega*, translated for use in this volume. They may be of service in assisting the reader to form an idea of the somewhat peculiar verse formation and of the structure of the plays themselves.

The excerpt from *Juan Moreira* shows both the verse and the prose, the play being written in a combination of both mediums, and displays also the dialect in which the original is written. It will be observed that the drama is divided into scenes, a scheme which has not been followed in the translation, as it was deemed confusing and unnecessary. This is common in nearly all Spanish plays, and at the time of Sardou was generally used in French drama. What are called scenes in this translation are called in the original *cuadros*, or pictures, a designation that has some significance.

Santos Vega is written entirely in verse, and the extract from it shows the ordinary verse of the drama proper as well as that of one of the songs.

It has been considered advisable to make the translations wholly in prose, for only in that way could the atmosphere of the original be duplicated or retained. A verse translation would not only be difficult but, under the circumstances, next to impossible.—ED.

Digitized by Google

JUAN MOREIRA

The following is taken from the end of Scene Five, Act Two.

ESCENA III

Dichos y VICENTA *arrodillada*

VICENTA. ¡Perdón, mi Juan querido! Yo creí que ya te habías muerto.

J. MOREIRA. ¿Y por eso me engañabas, canalla?

VICENTA. [*Suplicante*] ¡No, mi Juan!

J. MOREIRA. ¿Y ese hombre que salió recién?

VICENTA. ¡Dios mío! [*Se desmaya.*]

J. MOREIRA. El rimordimiento te valga. Adiós, Tata Viejo! ¡Adiós, cachorro é mi alma! la partida va en mi acecho y no tardará en yigar á este rancho.

TATA VIEJO. ¡Hijo!

JUANCITO. ¡Tatita mío!

J. MOREIRA. ¡No puedo! ¡Debo partir!
a peliar con la partida
hasta vencer ó morir.
¡Adiós, familia querida!
[*Les suelta un beso y vase*]

TATA VIEJO. ¡Cachorro! vení á mis brazos.
[JUANCITO *lo abraza*]
Lloremos por tu tatita,
deshonrao villanamente
por aqueya, tu mamita.

ESCENA IV

Dichos, SARGENTO *y cuatro policianos.*

SARGENTO. ¡Juan Moreira!

TATA VIEJO. [*Retrocediendo*] ¿Eh?

Digitized by Google

SARGENTO. Escondido aquí ha d' star,
y sin andarle cuerpiando
lo dibemos d' yivar.
TATA VIEJO. ¡Por favor!
SARGENTO. Tuito es al ñudo
amarren bien á este viejo,
de manera que le queden
las marcas en el peyejo.
JUANCITO. ¡Mamita!
TATA VIEJO. ¡Barbaros! ¡Canayas!
no se 'stén ansí abusando,
pelen tuitos las charrascas;
vamos á morir peliando.
[*El* SARGENTO *le apunta, el* TATA VIEJO *forcejea, y cae él.*

Telón rápido

SANTOS VEGA

The following is from the first part of the Second Act, where ROSA *and* GUMERSINDO *ask* SANTOS VEGA *to sing them a song.*

GUMERSIN. [*Saliendo de la pulpería*]
¡Ahijuna, ché, Santos Vega!
VICENTA. [*A* RUFINA, *que sale*]
¡El mejor cantor del mundo!
GUMERSIN. [*A los paisanos que van saliendo de la pulpería*]
¡El alma de nuestra tierra!
[*Todos saludan y rodean al payador*]
ROSA. Yo que nunca lo he escuchado
ahura escucharlo quisiera.

Digitized by Google

VICENTA. Haga vibrar la guitarra
dando comienzo a la fiesta
para que antes que ninguna
ella suene la primera.

GUMERSIN. Saque al viento una canción
donde ponga el alma entera:
su alma brava y melancólica
qu'es el alma de esta tierra.

SANTOS. [*Disponiéndose á cantar*]
¡Ahí va mi canción y mi alma
que nunca canto sin ella!
[*En estilo triste y acompañándose con la guitarra*]
Como el ombú corpulento
parece que está llorando
sus hojas cuando cantando
hiere sus ramas el viento,
yo tambien en mi tormento
de todas mis aflicciones
voy llorando mis canciones
que como hojas dispersadas
se lleva el viento en bandadas
de dolientes corazones.

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX C

THE NATIONAL DRAMA OF THE ARGENTINE

BY

JACINTO BENAVENTE

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY

JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

The theater subsisted for many years in the Argentine Republic upon imported fare, offering a free haven to the dramatic literatures of the world. But, as could scarcely be otherwise among a people of such culture and importance, Argentina possesses today a national drama of its own which is deserving of study and sufficiently developed to occupy two theaters with credit and profit, in which no plays are performed except those by native authors.

In origin the Argentine drama was unmistakably popular. Its characters and plots are alike thoroughly typical of the gaucho spirit, while its heroes are suggestive of *Martín Fierro*, of the celebrated poem of that name, which is certainly the most genuine popular poetic creation, whether considered

Editor's Note: It is entirely through the generosity of Mr. Underhill and of Charles Scribner's Sons that I am able to reprint this essay which here appears in English for the first time. It was first published in the *Heraldo* of Madrid, and was afterward collected in book form under the title, *El Teatro del Pueblo*, Madrid, 1909. Before it was used by the *Heraldo* the essay came out in one of the Buenos Aires daily papers.

Benavente visited the Argentine just previous to 1909 and in his volume of *Table Talk*, Madrid, 1910, he has this to say of his visit. "I have already been in Buenos Aires, but I was not in the class of

Digitized by Google

from the point of view of form or of substance, that is known to literature. Nowhere else have the life and soul of the *paisano*, his language, his mode of thought and feeling, been so faithfully conveyed, or the collective consciousness of the people so nicely reflected by the individual genius of the artist as in this admirable poem. The heroes of the popular Argentine drama are all *Martín Fierros*, gauchos born upon the pampas, with a limitless expanse stretching about them which is eloquent of liberty, like the brook to Sigismund, murmuring of far fields lying open to his flight. At the same time they are touched with melancholy, with that wistful yearning of the eyes and of the soul before which vast spaces have been unrolled, which may, indeed, be desired, in one life, but which many lives would not suffice to explore. There is something of the Arab in the fatalism and ferocity of these men—and also something of the Spaniard as well, although this is included in the Arab—as if here, too, men believed that what must be has been already written, and stood prepared to hurl themselves against the destiny of their fate in blind assault—which is our own history—in the pretense that by the mere impact they might blot out one jot of what had been set down in its immutable decrees.

The rebellion of the gaucho spirit at the encroachments of

popular celebrities. I was not received with a band, I delivered no lectures, and nobody became at all enthusiastic. The Argentines did not lose their heads over me, nor I mine over them. I went to travel, to see, without attaching more importance to the trip than to any other. When I returned I did not consider myself justified in publishing 'impressions' or 'My Voyage to Argentine' or any other book of the sort now in fashion, because I did not feel that one or two months were sufficient time in which to learn anything, much less to wax eloquent over the future of the Argentine, its industries, or its intellectual achievements. What I saw I retained for myself, and what I assimilated will appear in due season."

We may take it then that this essay on "The National Drama of the Argentine" is the partial result of the assimilation of which Benavente speaks.

Digitized by Google

civilization upon the free domain of the pampas provides the element of conflict in these plays. There is much of the spirit of our Spanish poetry and popular drama in their protagonists. The Weaver of Segovia, *Eusebio* in *The Devotion of the Cross*, *Paulo* in *El condenado por desconfiado*, *Manrique*, *Don Alvaro*, and even *Tenorio* himself are easily recognizable as of the kin of *Martín Fierro*, *Juan Moreira*, and *Santos Vega* the Payador.

When acted, the plays lose nothing of their popular flavor. Rather, it is enhanced by familiar songs and dances, such as the *vidalitas*, *cielos*, *tristes*, *décimas*, *Pericón con relaciones*, *El gato*, and others of the sort. The actors are incomparable masters of picturesque realism. In no other way may so vivid an idea of what the primitive popular theaters must have been be obtained as by attending these performances. Nothing could more strikingly suggest the atmosphere of the productions of the Globe Theater in London or those of our own *corrals* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet the Argentine theater of today no longer confines itself to the depiction of popular customs or to the portrayal of the popular point of view. So distinctly individual a nation, whose characteristics are so strongly marked both politically and socially, despite the fact that it is composed of diverse elements of the most thorough cosmopolitanism, can but stimulate the playwright and invite him to probe its life in all its complexity. Those who condemn contemporary Argentine literature because it has been influenced by foreign tendencies, accusing it more particularly of having been completely gallicized, ignore the fact that no civilized nation today has escaped this hue of uniformity, which to the superficial observer invariably appears to be French, when in truth it is nothing more than the coloring of civilization. How require the artist to shut his eyes and, becoming a greater Papist than the Pope, reproduce only what has ceased to

Digitized by Google

exist elsewhere throughout the social fabric? It is too much like asking the man of mature years to ape the manners of a child, which in one of tender age are becoming. Arts and graces out of their proper sphere divest themselves of all charm. What can be more impertinently disagreeable than the artist who affects the ingenuousness and simplicity of the primitive, striving to be classic with reminiscences of Cervantes and the trappings of Santa Teresa? As our life is no longer that life, why masquerade in the garments of the era? These are appropriate enough, no doubt, in their proper place, where they may be admired and studied behind glass in the cabinets of archæological museums, but they are wholly unsuitable when paraded down our modern streets among automobiles and trolley-cars. To shed tears over the classic is a weakness of decrepit criticism.

Argentine is too young and vigorous a nation to father an art which is founded upon tradition. There are no ruins in the country over which to lament. How fortunate a people that possess no Gothic cathedrals? Here is a country in which art keeps step with life. The modern Argentine drama contrives not to be left at the portal, as has been the fate of the theater for the most part throughout history, where it has forever lagged behind every other form of artistic endeavor. In the romantic movement it was outstripped both by poetry and the novel, nor has the sequence been otherwise in the later days of naturalism and of symbolism.

The Argentine drama refuses to lag behind. Whether or not its achievements have been more notable than those of poetry and the novel, it is in no sense an anachronism among them, as it has been and doubtless still is among other peoples. Plays of genuine merit are offered continuously for public attention. It has not been possible for me to acquaint myself with many of them, for the reason that Argentine playwrights refrain from publishing their works, in

Digitized by Google

common with a majority of their English and French brethren, in order that they may better protect themselves against the incursions of the philosophical managers, who have accepted Proudhon's doctrine that "Property is a form of theft," interpreting it as having especial reference to literary property.

Among the better-known plays, *Los Muertos*, by Florencio Sánchez, deserves mention. It has been warmly praised, the author being held in high esteem by his countrymen. Much is justly expected of him, as he is still a young man. Gregorio Laferrere is a master of dialogue, an adept in painting society and social usages. His play *Jettatore* has been favorably received in Madrid. León Pagano, García Velloso, and Jiménez Pastor have also written pieces of real merit, so that it may be anticipated that the Argentine theater will shortly be equipped with authors and plays in ample number to free it from dependence upon the production of foreign countries. Nevertheless, the foreign is still much affected in certain quarters, as it is among us, although these, happily, are narrowly defined. To look upon native art with contempt is a foolish frailty of Spanish blood.

My first acquaintance with the National Argentine Theater found me but poorly prepared for what I was about to see. Argentinians themselves had predicted that I was certain to be bored as well as disgusted. On the contrary, I was neither. The plays and actors seemed to me to be excellent, not only at this, but at all subsequent performances.

The leading actress, Elena Podestá, is beautiful in person and possessed of faultless diction. Her manner is restrained and correct, recalling decidedly Rosario Pino, while, like her, she has the faculty of expressing profound emotion with singular simplicity of means. The Podestás are a prolific dynasty of actors who form the basis of the companies at the two national theaters. Others of the family distinguished themselves in various rôles. Sr. Ducasse, the juvenile, must

Digitized by Google

be singled out for praise, as must also Sr. Bataglia, who acts a *gringo* part in the play *La Rendición* to such perfection that his performance may well be compared with the work of the most celebrated actors. The name of the character actress has escaped me, but she is an excellent artist—a Spaniard, if I am not mistaken. The *mise-en-scène*, management, and grouping of the characters afford proof of most skilful stage direction, together with admirable training upon the part of the actors.

While the national Argentine drama may still be regarded by some with a patronizing eye, it is feared by the professional importers of conventional theatrical wares long since more or less worn out as a dangerous menace in the future. To the unprejudiced observer who is at liberty to discriminate and to applaud honest effort in accord with its deserts it appears to be a sincere and artistic beginning which is sure to bring to this great people a future day of glory. If the nation were not admirable in many things it would certainly be so in this:—every pretentious building throughout the land is one dedicated to education. When a people provides for education with such devotion we may well declare, in the words of the evangelist, "The rest shall be added unto you."

Digitized by Google

APPENDIX D

The Native Music

At the time Mr. Fassett was translating the songs in *Santos Vega* he told me that he had discovered that they could be sung to some gaucho music which he had on his phonograph. This interested me, and I investigated the matter, with the result that I am able to give here a list of creole songs and dances which are included in the Columbia and the Victor catalogues. It seems to me that the reader who has a phonograph will find these records of service in appreciating the native music of the Argentine, which has been confined to the tango with us so far.

Columbia Graphophone Company	Victor Talking Machine Company		
A 688	63890	62774	65605
A 693	62937	65866	62156
T 831	63693	62154	67604
T 769	62195	62939	
T 870	62182	62152	

This list covers a fairly wide range of selections, but it by no means exhausts the records of native music which are procurable. It is at once an easy and a pleasant method of becoming familiar with the songs and dances of the pampas which play so pronounced a part in the Dramas Criollos.—Ed.

THE END

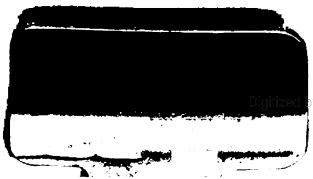
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN - UNIV LIBS

3023797416

0 5917 3023797416